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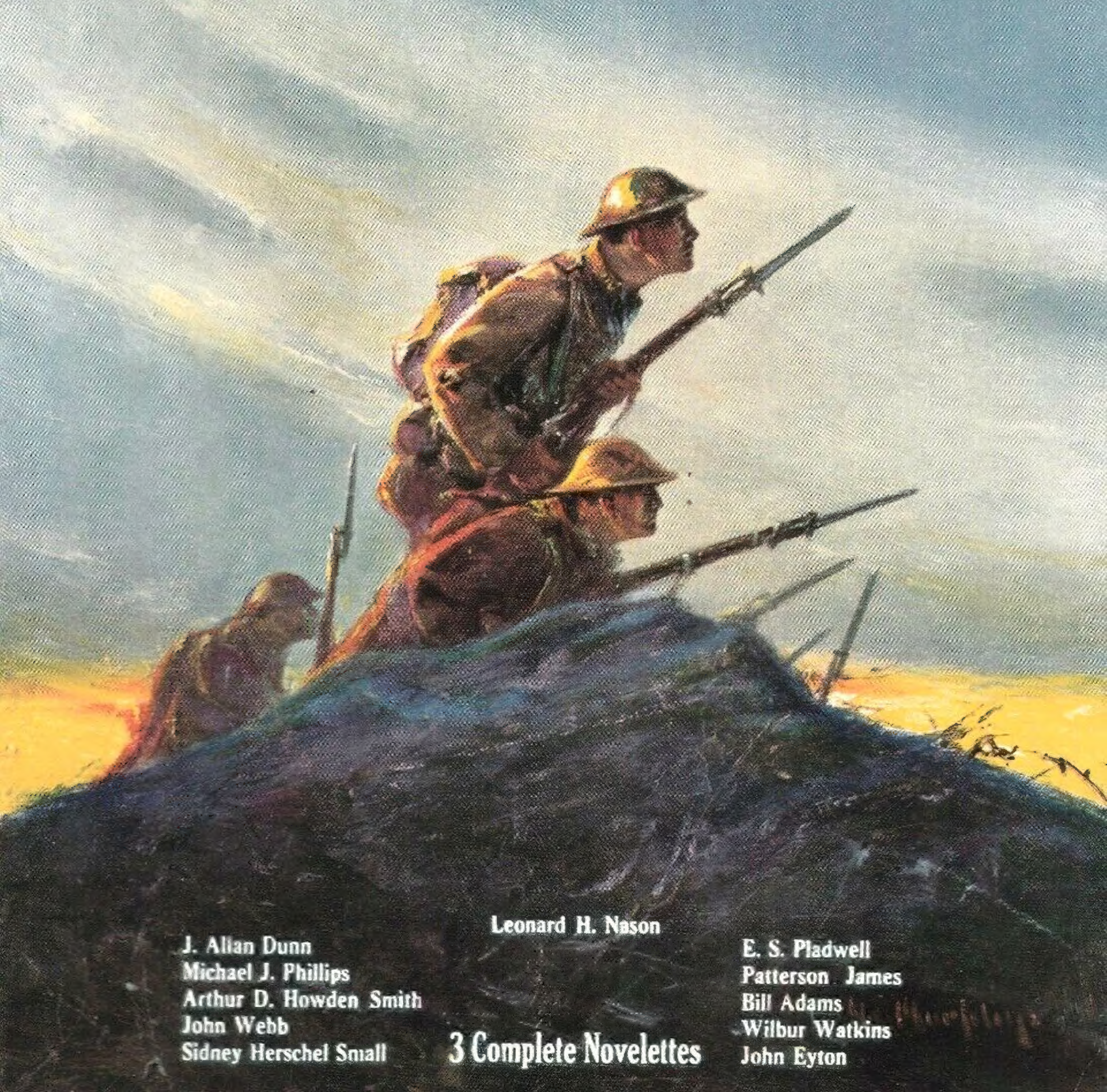

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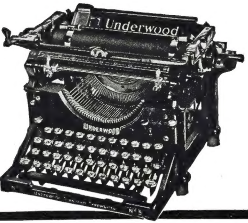

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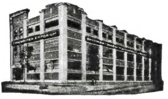

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THREE LIGHTS from a MATCH

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Leonard H Nason

Author of "Five Hundred Francs," "The Luger," etc.

THE north side of the hill sloped sharply down to the Cierges-Montfaucon road. It was a fairly lofty hill, once a pleasant pasture, but for four years nothing had cropped the grass on it but bursting shells and whistling bullets, nor had anything sheltered under the trees there but German guns. Black night covered the hill now, a blackness that hinted at rain, but there was no wind to rustle the long grass and wave the clumps of bushes back and forth.

The hill was lonely and deserted in that absolute solitude that only modern war can bring to a stretch of countryside, for the gas kills off all the little scamperers in the grass, and rats will not stay if there are no living to leave food, nor any dead to furnish it themselves.

There was a little traffic on the road at the foot of the hill. Not much, because it was a side road and also because the Germans were not far away. In all those four long years there had never been much travel on that road, not even as much as there was now.

In the early part of the evening there had been a great deal of rattling and banging, first audible off to the east, on the main road from Banthéville to Montfaucon. The noise grew louder and finally deafening, then slowly lessened once more, and faded out in the direction of Romagne Woods. It was a column of baby tanks, going up to give the infantry a hand in the next day's shove. After them came a column of machine guns, the little carts creaking and bumping over the stones, the mules' feet pattering on the hard road.

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Silence for a time, then a strange medley of soft noises, a rumor, a disturbance of sound waves like that caused by the flow of a broad current of water on uneven ground —a battalion of infantry on the march, coming up from reserve, hiking in from rest billets perhaps, or simply changing from one sector to another.

The scrape of a hob-nailed shoe on a stone, the *shush* of a slicker rubbing, the thud of a pack being shifted to an easier position, the tick of a slung rifle tapping against some other part of equipment, the metallic knock of a canteen being replaced in its carrier and shoved home against the cup in the bottom—these sounds, blended and multiplied four or five hundred times, made up the soft murmur that swelled from the road hidden in the black hollow between the hills.

There was no talking from that road. Those doughboys had no desire nor any strength to talk. They had been on that road all night, and both from the length of time that they had marched and from the scarcity of other travelers they knew that they were nearing their destination. They did not want to talk. They wanted to be as quiet as they could. Officers sometimes became confused and took the wrong road, or followed the right one too far, and the first warning the marchers would have would be the hum of a machine gun, like a rattlesnake buzzing, but with this difference, that the snake gives warning and then strikes, while the machine gun does both simultaneously.

So these men marched as quietly as they could, telling themselves that as long as they stayed in close formation they could not be in the danger zone, yet each with the thought in his mind of tales he had heard of outfits caught in column by machine-gun fire and of others that had marched into towns still held by the enemy, and had not discovered it until they had gone to look for billets and found the cellars full of Germans.

So the infantry went their way toward that place where they would lie down and wait for the dawn of what would be the last day for many of them.

Much later in the night, or rather, earlier in the morning, there was a new disturbance on the road, louder this time, almost as loud as that made by the tanks. Much rattling and bumping, the clank of metal against metal, creaking of leather, and the pound of horses' feet, the swish of whips, muffled exhortations—

"Giddup out o' that, ol' rack of bones!"

Then silence, broken by uneasy stamping and men muttering. A regiment of artillery had halted at the foot of the hill and did not resume the march. Instead, there was a soft command, yet clearly audible.

"First, piece forward, ho! Come on, now. Take up the slack! Make 'em all pull!"

Rumble! Crash! Bang! Whack! Whack! A little cursing; then:

"That's good, take 'em up the hill, sargint, and unlimber. The captain's up there; he'll show you. Now, then, second piece forward, ho! Watch out for the ditch, now!"

With much panting of horses and thudding of hoofs on the soft ground the first piece arrived at its destination, a place where the slope of the hill was more gentle than it was nearer the road and far enough below the crest to be away from the skyline.

From the darkness below came the sounds of the rest of the column turning off the road, the carriages crossing the ditch and coming up the slope one by one. Some went farther down the road and turned off there; others turned off before they came to the hill's foot, and the sound of their going into position came faintly from the eastward.

Here was a relief from the hill's loneliness. These men would stay on the slope a while; they would dig pits for themselves to live in, the enemy would throw shells at them and tear up the ground, and after a time these men would bury their dead and go on, and the hill would be left alone once more.

The hill was well acquainted with the ways of men at war. Men of the Aduactici, the Condrusi, and the Paemani had camped there, nameless tribes before them, and the Roman legions after them, the knights of Charlemagne, the troopers of Napoleon the First, and those of the last Bonaparte. All of them, Gaul, Roman, and Frenchman, had slept, and fought, and dug their graves, and departed, and the grass had sprung up and hidden all trace of them.

Now a new race had come to battle there and leave the shells of machine gun and forty-five to mingle and decay with the axheads and broken swords and leaden balls of other wars.

"Unlimber those guns," said a voice in the darkness, "and then get those teams out of the way."

"Will we have to fire tonight, sir?"

"No. I hope not, anyway. Just unlimber and get into some kind of shape so we can shoot in a pinch, and then get your men to bed."

Then grunting and straining, the clank of the toggle falling against the bottom of the limber, creak of axles as the gun was wheeled into place, and the rumble of the limbers going off to a place of shelter. *Clang!* The apron went down. *Bang!* Up went the shield, then a few soft scratchings, the rustle of shelter halves and slickers being spread, a sigh or two, then silence. The gun-crew had gone to bed.

IN BACK of this particular gun a man dropped to the ground and rested his head on his raised knees. Another man, coming up the hill and groping in the blackness, fell over the first.

"Where the —— are you going?" demanded he who had been fallen upon.

"Is that you, 'Spike?' " asked the second man.

"No, it's Marshal Foch. I'm think'n' about havin' a man named Guthrie shot at sunrise."

"Huh!" grunted the other man. "You expect to see a sunrise? You got a supply sergeant's chance in ——, I'm tellin' yuh."

"We ain't as near as that, are we?"

"We've been on the road forty-five minutes from Montfaucon goin' north. Figure it out for yourself."

Guthrie threw down his blankets with a thud.

"Where's 'Baldy'?" he continued.

"Gettin' the tarp off the spare caisson. You don't aim to sleep on top the ground, do you?"

"That's what I do. I'll be asleep standin' up in a couple more minutes."

Came a hail from down the hill.

"Hey, gang, where are you?"

"Up here," called back the man called Spike. Whereat there was much cursing and cries of "Shut up!" from the direction of the guns. Very soon a man appeared out of the shadows bearing some burden on his shoulder. This he hurled down with a loud slap. The other two men seized it, unfolded it, and then the three rapidly spread their blankets upon it, their slickers over their blankets, and then crawled under the pile.

"How far off are the Boche?" asked Spike again.

"Don't bother me," answered Guthrie. "The Boche are the least of my worries. If they're across the road, they'll open up on us at daylight, I'll get hit, and that'll be the end of these sightseein' tours at night. Lemme sleep!"

"Sleep, that's me," said Spike. "All night on the road, start and stop, sit down an' wait, git up and go on, walk along side a horse and hold him up so's he won't fall down, pick up a horse that had fell down and set him on his feet, pull a wagon outta the mud, lend a hand to push a truck back on the road, no chance to smoke, lie down in the mud to rest an' have a truck miss yuh by a sixteenth of an inch. Night marchin' ain't the most fun in the world. Now we got here, let's sleep, says I, because we'll have to get up in a hour or so and dig in."

"You knew what you were coming back to. Why didn't you stay in the S. O. S. when you had the chance? You can't growl because you were sent back to the front. You came back of your own accord. Once I get out I hope I'll have sense enough to stay."

Thus Simmons, while he removed his pistol, which was bruising his back.

"That's what I thought, but I changed my mind. They give yuh an awful dirty deal back there, kick yuh around from camp to camp like a wanderin' Jew. I hope we stay in this position awhile; I'd like to catch up on my sleep. This runnin' around the roads all night is hard on the feet."

Here Guthrie stirred angrily. "Shut up, you two chatterin' jugheads, and let a sensible man sleep."

Thereupon the two were silent and shortly after slept.

The three men in back of the gun were the remnants of the battery liaison detail, men whose duty it is to keep in touch with the infantry that the battery is supporting, men who carry messages and act as guides for relieving troops and do other odd jobs that are more dangerous than picturesque. Guthrie, who had been a corporal, Knowlton, known as Spike, and Baldy Simmons. The first two were old soldiers; that is, this, the Argonne offensive, was their fourth major action.

Spike had been wounded during the latter part of the Chateau-Thierry affair and had rejoined the battery two days before, very informally, simply alighting from a truck and taking his place in the ranks. In such a case no questions would be asked. It would be a foregone conclusion that the man so joining had gone absent from somewhere without authority. Indeed, this practice was abetted by commanding officers, who kept men of their organizations who were in hospital informed of the regiment's location, in case the man in hospital should become homesick.

* * *

WHEN it was broad day the battery was aroused. It was a gray day, with wreaths of mist, whereat the battery rejoiced, for if the visibility was low there would be no firing on their part, and friend Fritz, not being able to see them from his balloons, would not favor them with a tin shower.

There was, however, plenty of work to be done. The gun-crews must dig pits for the trail spades and then dig a ditch beside each gun in which to take shelter while Fritz cast roses at them. The machine-gunners set up their guns and dug themselves holes in which to crawl; the drivers took their teams off to water and then came back and groomed, one man unharnessing one horse of a team, grooming it, harnessing up again, and then repeating the operation on his second horse.

The other two teams—there were three to each gun, and three more to the caisson—remained harnessed. This was so that if a bombardment began, there would be some chance of getting the guns out and the drivers would be better able to control their teams than if they were all unharnessed.

The three men of the liaison detail endeavored to slumber. Simmons opened one eye and lifted his head, then let it fall back on the blankets again. There was no sign of any food, and that would be the only thing for which these three would get up. However, men engaged in arduous labor do not take kindly to the sight of three of their fellows wrapt in sleep. A stone sailed toward the liaison detail from where one of the gun-crews attacked a flinty soil. Spike opened a bleary eye.

"Hey! Lay off the alley lilies!" he called sleepily.

"Git up outta that!" the men of the gun crew replied. "First call blew an hour ago!"

The three stirred not. A machine gunner, going back to his gun after a visit to the water cart with several empty canteens, stirred Simmons with his foot.

"You dead or asleep?" he queried.

No reply.

"Guess he's dead," said the machine gunner and reaching down, he was about to appropriate one of the blankets that covered the three men. He gazed, however, into a hostile blue eye and changed his mind.

"Thought you was dead, old fellar," he said apologetically. "Yuh smell like yuh was."

The owner of the blue eye made no answer. Neither prayers nor insults could get him up before he felt like rising.

The merry clink of pick and shovel continued to sound from the direction of the guns. The noise of it drowned another sound, a confusion of rattles and clicks from the far side of the hill. Guthrie rose suddenly with a howl, as a horse pranced within a foot of him.

"Where the ——," he began, then subsided as he noted that the horse was ridden by an officer of field rank.

His two companions sat up themselves, dazed and half-awake, yet with a very lively premonition of disaster.

"What is it? Boche comin'?" asked Spike.

Simmons turned his head toward the rear.

"Oh, boy," he cried. "Get up quick, gang! Here comes the Army!"

The three arose precipitately while the gun-crews jeered, and then, gathering their blankets hastily, the three gazed at the cause of their sudden arousal. Mounting the opposite side of the hill, overrunning the crest and then flowing steadily downhill, was a wave of men, a yard or so between each, their gas masks at the alert, their bayonetted rifles slung on one shoulder, and their faces very solemn. They were infantry, advancing in waves, and the fact that they were in battle formation would lead one to believe that they expected combat at any moment.

Behind the first wave came another, machine gunners with their dismantled guns over their shoulders, one man carrying the gun and another the tripod; stretcher bearers, and a man wearing the brown uniform with the bronze sphinx on the collar that showed he was an interpreter. The artillerymen gazed at these strangers with a lively interest; the diggers rested on their shovels and commented.

Of a sudden the three liaison men whooped with laughter and the gun crews, wondering, looked to see what caused the mirth.

There was an officer with the second wave who was wearing spurred boots instead of puttees. He had a pair of field glasses hung about his neck and still wore his insignia of rank, but had no Sam Browne belt. Not he, but the man who was with him was the object of laughter.

This was a nervous looking sergeant, belted about the middle with a belt from which hung two pistols. Thrust through the belt was a third, a brass-barrelled affair for the shooting of Very lights and rockets. Across the man's breast were two straps, from one of which hung a plotting-board and from the other a huge and corpulent map-case. Over his shoulder he carried a periscopic telescope, which was a long vertical telescope, fixed, to a tripod, with a window in the upper side of the telescope, instead of in the end.

The idea of this thing was that a man could get down in a hole, set up the periscope and see what was going on, without exposing himself. This apparatus would draw bullets from machine gun and rifle snipers, one-pounder shells, rum jars from trench mortars, gas and H. E. — everything from 77mm all the way up to 309, and aerial bombs, anywhere from fifteen to thirty seconds after its appearance.

It's real name was a periscopic goniometer, and it had an apparatus on its lower end for measuring angles, hence its supposed usefulness to artillery.

"What's that over your shoulder?" called Simmons.

"You got a long ways to go with all that junk," added Guthrie. "You better lose some of it."

"Maybe they're out on a practise march," said Spike, very audibly to the infantry. "Ever been up at the front before?"

The doughboys grinned bashfully, but made no answer.

"You're in for a fine time, boy. You just wait a while. Say, who's that guy with all the pistols and the pipe over his shoulder?"

"He's an artillery observer. That's his officer with him," said one of the infantrymen.

"Oh, he is, is he?" cried the three. "He'll observe, all right, all right. Oh, man, won't he though! He better take off some of that hardware, or he'll never get up so far as the back rows under the gallery. So he's an observer, is he? I thought he was a plumber or a gasman. Better throw that periscope away, sergeant. Jerry gets awful riled when he sees one of those."

The laden artilleryman paid no heed to his tormentors; he was quite a way down the hill by now and almost out of earshot.

"That's a fine outfit of Johns," said Guthrie. "Officers mounted and everything. Too lazy to walk. We oughtn't to kid them, though. We ought to have some respect for the dead. They're as good as dead now."

"I would say," remarked Spike, "that that officer better get off that horse pretty *priesa*, or he's goin' to have some excitement."

The infantry had reached the foot of the hill now and halted, dropping to the ground on their knees, while the mounted officer went forward to decide which road they should take for their further advance. A pillar of white smoke appeared in front of him, with the suddenness of a stage effect. Another appeared just behind him, spreading low and twisting to right and left like a contortionist. A commotion was visible in the kneeling ranks.

"I guess he'll get off that horse, now," remarked Spike.

He was right. The officer did dismount, very hurriedly.

"We must be pretty close for them to be able to see those doughboys through this fog," said Simmons. "I guess those were a couple of gas shells. I didn't hear any explosion."

"I think there's a cross-roads down there and those two shells may be just some of the attention a cross-roads gets on general principles."

"Yeh, but they don't shell cross-roads this time o' day."

"Might," interrupted Guthrie. "What's this?"

Down went pick and shovel with a clatter, down went the machine-gunners' tools, away went the liaison details' blankets. Every man in that portion of the hill dropped whatever was in his hand and made his way at his best speed down the slope. Running feet drummed; men panted curses; soldiers leaped up from where they had laid hidden in the long grass and joined the headlong rush.

A two-wheeled cart had appeared, above the side of which protruded a marmite can, and from the rear of which a man swung his legs, holding on to two long pans so that they would not fall out the back. The battery chow cart had arrived and breakfast was about to be served.

"Now don't begin to sound off," cried the mess sergeant, he who had held on to the pans, "because yuh ain't got anything to eat. It ain't my fault. I can't make bacon, nor I ain't no magicker to pull it out of the air. Here's all we got; so step up, them that wants it; and them that don't, needn't eat none of it."

The men all stepped up, however, and presented their mess kits. First there was Karo syrup in a big can. Next, the two pans were full of cut bread, of which each man got one slice. This bread was good and tough, with a slight sour taste to it, very appetizing. It was made in round loaves about a foot in diameter, and nobody ever knew whether it was fresh baked or not; it always tasted the same.

This bread was brought up from the field bakery in trucks, piled up as if it were wood or coal. It would be unloaded at the division ration dump and stacked up on the ground. From here it would be loaded into the smaller chow carts and taken up to the organization kitchens. If it picked up a little mud in the process, a little horse manure, or anything else of a foreign nature, the cook would wipe it off before he cut it, and the ultimate consumer would never know the difference.

Once upon a time, though, a load of bread *was* thrown away. A truck-driver was killed and scattered amidst the bread, and there were so many parts of him that the whole load of bread was quite spoiled. It was thrown over the side and some Senegalese sharpshooters gathered it up.

The battery commander appeared from an old German dugout he had discovered and beckoned to the mess sergeant.

"How come," he inquired, "the light breakfast? Do you want me to have a mutiny on my hands?"

"I'm sorry, sir," said the mess sergeant. "But when we went to look and see what there was to eat, we couldn't find a thing. All we got is a lot of bacon grease and a bag of flour. We'll have to make that up into slum for dinner. This Karo is the last of the lot. We got enough bread for the next two meals. After that, less we get somethin' up today, we're goin' to be out o' luck."

"How does it happen we're so low?"

"I guess Fritz must be raisin' —— back along them roads."

"How d'yuh like this for chow, after eatin' yourself sick every day back in the hospital?" asked Guthrie, polishing his mess-kit lid with a morsel of bread.

"Didn't eat myself sick every day," answered Spike. "When I was in the hospital I got soup and soup and soup, 'til the water run out of my eyes as though I was cryin'. After I was out, everywhere I stopped for a meal they opened a can of goldfish. If you think this is a hard life you ought to try it back of the lines for a while. Anyway, loss o' eats don't bother me half as much as loss o' sleep. I sure do crave slumber."

Berram! A sullen growl from the road. Men stood up to see better.

"Where did that one go?" they asked of each other, but there was no cloud of smoke to tell them.

"I guess we better be diggin' ourselves a hole," said the laconic Guthrie.

"I guess we had," agreed Spike. "Jerry's goin' to shower down after a while."

BAM! A thunder of trampling hoofs, loud swearing, cries, rattling of wheels.

"Golly!" muttered Spike. "They dropped one in the limbers."

The battery began to disintegrate like picnickers at the approach of a shower. Men gobbled down the last mouthful and hastily ran back to wherever they had their place of refuge, in order to get it completed as quickly as possible.

"Come on, let's go," urged Spike. "Let's bear down on a shovel, or we're liable to get hurt, an' I for one don't yearn to go back to the hospital again."

They went slowly up the hill and then paused to look around and see if there was not some shell-hole that might be deepened into a place of shelter.

"This fog is goin' to burn off," remarked Spike, looking around at the fog-wreathed hills. "And when it does, I bet we have a warm time up here."

"All the more reason we should dig ourselves a dugout," said Simmons.

"That reminds me," cried Spike. "The

Old Man may send us up to the front, and then we won't need to dig a hole."

"You go ask him, Simmons. You got a drag with him. Tell him we want to go up so that we won't have to dig a dugout."

"That's a good thought. I'll see what can be done," agreed Simmons. "I'll tell him we'd like to share that dugout of his and maybe he'll let us."

"Tell him we're all out of champagne, too," called Guthrie after Simmons' retreating figure.

SIMMONS went down past the guns to an old German dugout that the captain had taken over for a post of command. A long time back there had been a battery of German artillery in some trees, about half-way down the hill, and Simmons remarked this fact as he went past the place. There was a lot of elephant-iron lying around there, which would be very good for a dugout roof. The wooden floors of the old gun-pits were still in place and a dressing station had been set up in one of them.

Simmons was surprized to see that there were a number of wounded men lying there already, looking very gray of countenance. His foot kicked a helmet with a long tear across the top. At the end of the tear was some dried blood and a few hairs.

"There's one tin hat that didn't stop a bullet," muttered Simmons to himself.

The captain stood before his dugout smoking a cigaret. His uniform was sprinkled with candle grease and he had need of a shave. Simmons stepped up to him and saluted.

"Sir," said he, "Could you tell me if the liaison detail will have to go up to the infantry today?"

"I don't really know, Simmons," said the captain. "I don't think any one knows. We can't fire unless this fog clears up. I don't know what the program is for today yet; the wires aren't in. I don't know where the infantry are even. I've got a hunch—" turning and looking across the road at the hill on the other side—"that there are Boches over there."

Simmons looked up the hill in back of the dugout, where the executive officer was laying the guns, assisted by a goniometer and a great deal of language. Then he turned back to the captain. The captain had disappeared.

"Hey!" cried Simmons in astonishment.

Then cries came from the hill in back of him. Some instinct prompted him to look overhead. There were four planes there, flying with the speed of light, very low, so low that he could make out the thin black and white cross on the under side of the wings and see the ribbons trailing from their rudders.

There was a sharp explosion and a ball of black smoke rose from the field a little way off. The planes turned like galloping horsemen and flew off to the right a little way, where they began to circle and dip. Simmons watched them in stony horror, too frightened to move.

"They're after the battalion P. C.," he thought, "and they sure are going to wreck it."

The planes seemed to be having things their own way, for there was no firing from the ground. Probably the regiment's machine guns had not been set up, or else their crews were late in bringing them into action. At last a machine gun began to pound, far off down the road, where some other outfit had camped. Then more joined in. Finally, when all their bombs were gone, the four planes took themselves off, flying rapidly, and disappeared in the fog. Simmons' knees shook under him.

"——," said he. "That was a close shave. I'd better be getting myself a dug-out."

Immediately he ran up the hill to where he had left Spike and Guthrie, whom he found flat on their stomachs in the grass, looking off in the direction the planes had disappeared, with wide and apprehensive eyes.

"How do you like your home now?" he asked Spike.

"I like it just as much," said Spike. "In hospital those birds come over at night and lay great big eggs the size of a steam boiler around. The night I was in the evacuation hospital at Coulommiers—nice moonlight night it was—one dropped three of them on us. It blew the Y. M. C. A. tent and the tent next to the one I was in all to ——, and it was night, too; no machine guns to drive him away. Just lie there in your pajamas and wait to be bumped off."

"How come he bombed a hospital?" asked Simmons.

"I don't know. There was a big cross on the front lawn, too."

"Yuh sure it was a German aviator?" asked Guthrie. "Maybe it was one of our'n. I wish I was an aviator. I know some doctors I'd bomb. Maybe they cut a boil for him some time."

"Aw, don't be such a —— fool. Come on, get up out of that grass and let's buscar a shovel and see what we can do to get a roof over our heads."

Spike and Guthrie arose, keeping all the time a wary eye for more planes and looked about for a suitable place to start work. "I know a good one," said Simmons. "Follow me, brave men, and I'll show it to you."

Over to their right, and near the top of the hill, was a series of small enclosures, made of earth built up about two feet from the ground. These enclosures were square and open on the north side; that is, toward the enemy.

"What are these?" asked Spike.

"I should say," began Simmons, "that these were gun pits probably put here in 1914, because they don't build barricades around guns in these enlightened times."

"They look like prehistoric sheep-pens to me," said Spike dubiously.

"How can we use 'em?" asked Guthrie. "They're too low, and the side toward Fritz is open."

"Observe!" said Simmons. "See those trees down there? There's *beaucoup* dugout iron in there. We bring up a big junk of it and rest one end on the front of this barricade, or sheep-pen, or dog-pound, or whatever it is, and then cover the iron with sod. There's as fine a dugout as ever sheltered a brave artilleryman. Block up the ends with shelter halves and there you are."

"Yeh," said Spike. "A good strong shelter that wouldn't keep out a BB shot from an air rifle."

"It'll keep the rain off us, won't it? Want to dig a ninety-foot abri with two entrances in this hill? Go ahead if you want to. Guthrie and I will watch you." Simmons snorted anger.

"No," sighed Spike. "Not for me. I might as well get killed now as later. It'll save me a lot of hard work. If you and Guthrie will go down and get the iron, I'll see what I can do about borrowing a shovel and a pick from one of the guns."

THE two agreed and went off to the trees, while Spike sought a pick and shovel from the gun crew of the nearest piece. The gun crew were engaged in watching the section chief lay the gun. This is a complicated task and tedious and difficult to explain.

The executive officer had a little instrument on a tripod, called a compass goniometer. It was very little larger than a watch. Through a window on the side of this, the executive peered at the gun. The section chief stood in front of the shield, with an extension on the gun-sight. He peered back at the executive through this sight, which was of course high enough to come up over the gun-shield.

"Drum so much, plateau so much more," called the executive, and the section chief repeated it after him, then went around to the sight and turned one little gimmick, called the drum, and another gimmick called the plateau, until the readings thereon corresponded with what the officer had called.

The gun-crew lay at ease and smoked. This stuff was over their heads, and they admitted it. When the gun was pointed properly, they would cut the fuse and put the shell in the breach. Then they would pull the lanyard and the Germans could bury their dead if they got the chance.

Spike arrived at the gun-pit.

"I guess I'll borrow this shovel a minute," he said loudly, then reached for the handle of one on the ground.

"Leave it alone," barked one of the gunners. "This ain't no ordnance dump. Go steal your own shovel; we had to steal ours."

"Aw, for —— sake, I ain't goin' to eat your old shovel. I just want to use it a minute. You birds will fire in a minute or two; yuh won't need a shovel."

"Yes, we will. We're goin' to bury a liaison guy."

"Hey, get out of the line of sight!" called the executive officer. "Go on! Git! Pull foot!

The executive was impatient, because while manipulating the goniometer it was necessary to remove his steel helmet, since the instrument had a compass in its internals and the steel affected it. To be bareheaded and well within range of all kinds of ironmongery is a very nerve-racking situation.

"Give us that shovel, will you?" cried Spike desperately.

"Naw! Yuh can't have no shovel!" called the section chief from behind the gun-shield. "We ain't puttin' out shovels t'day. Git —— outta here. Can't yuh see we're busy?"

Spike moved off sadly and went over to where the machine gunners peered up into the gray skies. Their two guns were ready mounted, a clip protruded from the side of each one, and the two gunners earnestly swept the sky with their field glasses. As they could not see more than a hundred feet up into the mist, this was lost labor, but they kept at it.

The ammunition-passers, spare gunners and *hoi polloi* stood uneasily about, while their sergeant exhorted them. He had come hot from an interview with the battalion commander, during the course of which he had explained why his guns had not fired during the recent air raid, and during which the major had expressed his opinion of all machine gunners, going back even as far as "Gatling Gun" Parker, under whom he had served in his youth. The sergeant was passing on the major's opinion, with a few added remarks.

"How's chances on borrowin' a pick and shovel?" asked Spike bashfully, during a pause for breath on the sergeant's part.

"Nawweain'tgotnopick!" snarled one of the men.

"Who the —— are you to speak up before your betters?" roared the sergeant. " 'Fine discipline yuh got in your outfit,' says the major to me. 'Your machine guns are as much use to me as a *cargador* would be to a Ladies' Aid Society.' He said that t' *me,* d'yuh hear me? All o' yuh put together wouldn't make the ash on a good soldier's cigaret! Now no one speaks again until I give him leave, or I'll knock his mouth around so's he can whisper in his own ear. Was you after a pick and shovel, Spike? Help yourself. There's one in the hole there, only don't forget where you got it. Now then," continued the sergeant, "you birds keep right on lookin' through those glasses and the rest o' you stick right by these guns. You won't be able to see nothin', but you keep lookin' and maybe the next time you'll be able to wait fifteen minutes before you get your breakfast."

"Can you compree that," said the sergeant to Spike, who was discreetly edging away with the shovel and pick over his shoulder. "We have an air raid an' every *hombre* in the machine-gun detail is down at the kitchen stuffin' himself with chow! It's a pity some of you wasn't ruined—" turning to regard the penitent gunners with a disgusted eye—"but them brass domes o' yours would turn a sixteen-inch shell, so it's no use hopin' to get rid of any of you that way."

Spike was out of earshot by that time, but when he looked back he could still see the sergeant waving his arms and going through the motions of tearing his hair.

SIMMONS and Guthrie were waiting impatiently beside a great half-section of elephant iron. This iron was corrugated and curved, so that when set up against a similar piece, the two would form an arch. This iron was used for roofing dugouts and tunnels, but often it was put up without any covering. This piece had a number of jagged holes in it where the infantry who had mopped up that particular section had peppered it, but beyond a little rust it was in good shape.

"Were you making that shovel?" asked Simmons.

"No, but the gun-crew was too mean to let me take theirs and the other three pieces are still digging. Then I went over to the machine guns, and they were pretty mad because they'd caught —— from the major for not bein' on the job when Jerry came over. I just about escaped with my life. I got the tools, though. I tell yuh, man, this outfit is about as lovable and friendly as a bunch of sidewinders gettin' new skins."

"Didn't I hear some one say last night that he was glad he was home again? I guess the old home isn't so happy now, is it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," replied Spike. "I come of a family of seven and we was always snappin' and snarlin' at each other. Man, when we set down to table, you'd think yuh was in a zoo. My old man would stand it just so long and then he'd grab a club he kept handy and just bear down left an' right with it, till the place was quiet. Ain't no home but what there's a little growlin' goes on now and then. Come on, let's get this place fixed up. The sun'll be out in a while, and then we're goin' to get some billy doos from Fritz."

Taking turns at the pick and shovel, the three men dug out a place beside the dirt wall of the old barricade, about a foot deep. They made the bottom of the hole slope down at one end, and dug a drain out of one corner, so that when it rained, they wouldn't have to sleep in a pond.

"That ought to be deep enough," said Simmons finally. "Let's put the roof on."

They turned the big piece of iron on end and let it gently down until one side of it rested on the dirt wall, then they covered the roof with a shelter-half and put sod on that to keep it from blowing away and to make some kind of camouflage. One end was blocked up with another shelter-half and dirt piled up to make it stronger, slickers and blankets laid on the bottom, and there they were. Protection against rain, and they could have a light in there after dark.

As far as protection against enemy missiles went, it was just as good as a deeper dugout, with the advantage of not being likely to collapse and bury its occupants alive. Of course, if a direct hit landed on it, whoever was in it at the time would be reported "missing in action."

When they came back from dinner, Spike's prediction regarding the weather had come true. The mist was gone, although the sky was overcast, and the surrounding country was clearly visible for some miles. The three men sat down at the door of their dugout, like prairie dogs before a burrow. At the first whistle of a shell, or the sudden rattle of machine guns that warned of an air raid, they had but to make one leap and they would be under cover.

"Man!" exclaimed Spike. "This is better than the hospital! Here we are, our bellies full of good chow—" Guthrie grunted sarcastically at this— "a box seat where we can watch a battle and a warm, dry place to sleep."

"I'd swap with the hospital if I could get the chance," said Guthrie.

"You wouldn't after you'd been there the first time," answered Spike. "I sure was glad when the day came when I could get back to my outfit."

"I don't feel that way," said Guthrie. "Wherever I make up my bunk is home for me. Hospital, guard-house, front line, rest billets, Texas, Vermont, or France, where I throw down, that's my home. Then I won't be homesick nor yearnin' for some place where I ain't at."

"That's a great system, anyway," agreed Simmons. "As for me, if I could get a little knock in the arm or a bit of hide off some part of me where I could lose a little, not much, but enough to get me a trip to the hospital and the right to wear a wound stripe, I'd be a happy man. My idea of a perfect day is to lay between sheets from morning until morning, and when I wanted to talk to a pretty girl, all I'd have to do would be to reach out and punch a button."

Spike laughed derisively.

"Sheets! Ha! Ha! Sheets, ——! Do yuh know what yuh have to do to get a sheet? Yuh have to be set to die, and if they think you're gettin' ready to collect your insurance, they put one sheet, just one, on the bottom of the bed. That's so they can wrap yuh up in it and rush yuh to the morgue when its over. Otherwise yuh sleep between blankets, and —— lucky if they ain't full of cooties. As fer punchin' a bell and gettin' a nurse, ain't no such thing. You holler like —— for an hour or so, and an orderly maybe will come in and call yuh a —— for yellin' so loud. Maybe all the hospitals ain't the same, but I was only in one, and that's what they done to me."

"Are those Boche or Allied planes?" asked Simmons suddenly, pointing upward.

Over to the right, far above a grove of pines, were three planes, flying about in circles.

"I can't tell," said Spike. "They're up too high. Suppose it's a fight?"

While the three men watched, a ball of black smoke appeared directly in the center of the group, what appeared to be the wing of one of the planes flew off, the plane tipped down, and then rushed headlong to earth. The other two flew swiftly off behind the trees.

"Did you see that?" breathed Simmons, horror-stricken.

"What do you suppose did that?" asked Spike. "Maybe an anti-aircraft gun made a direct hit. Just one shell! Golly, that's good shootin'!"

"The other two shot that one down," suggested Guthrie.

"Me, I'm glad I can do my fightin' on the ground, and when I'm hit I don't have to fall half a mile or so. After that I guess I'll take a walk. Anybody comin'?"

Neither of the other two showed any inclination to stroll, so Spike walked down the hill alone. The dressing station in the old gun-pit was doing a rushing business.

"Where d'yuh get all the customers?" Spike asked an orderly.

"Oh, they come in from everywhere," said the medical man. "Stray shells, walkin' wounded from the doughboys collapsin', snipers' targets—all kinds of casualties. It's not so bad as it was this morning, though. We had quite a rush after that air raid. Well, these birds will go out and get a nice long rest, while you and I are up here in the cold this Winter."

"I pity 'em. I pity 'em," said Spike. "They're goin' out into a cold and cruel world, and no mistake."

Spike looked curiously around at the gunpit. It was one of four, all of them with board floors and with the walls of the pit boarded up to a height of about two feet. The floor was sloped for drainage, and Spike thought what a good place one of these pits would be to sleep in. The one that housed the dressing station was the only one that was occupied.

Spike went on down to the road, where two M. P.'s sat in the ditch. All those that went by them toward the front they allowed to pass without hindrance, but when one came from the direction of the enemy, they rose and demanded his business. Spike proffered them tailor-made cigarets, the last of a package he had brought up from hospital with him.

While the three men puffed silently, a fourth man arrived with a prisoner under his wing. The prisoner was a chubby faced boy of about fifteen, clad in an overcoat far too large for him. He looked quite sullen and defiant, and gave very much the impression of a schoolboy caught in the act of stealing apples.

"Will one o' you guys," said the prisoner's guard, "take this bird back to the stockade?"

"Leave him sit down here," answered one of those in the ditch. "We'll take him back when we get a bunch of them. It's a fierce drag way up that hill."

"Who's got all the tailor-made cigarets?" asked the guard suddenly.

Spike responded immediately.

"Have one," he said. "Can I give the kid one?"

The three policemen looked at each other. This was not according to law. This guy might slip the German a weapon or a map or something rolled up in the cigaret paper.

"Yuh better not give him no cigarets," said the man in charge of the prisoner. "These Huns is bad medicine."

"Aw, ——!" replied Spike. "I know 'em. This ain't my first time at the front. I compree the Jerries, I'll tell the world. Look at my wound stripe. Give the kid a cigaret; he won't bite. It's all right. I'm an old soldier; I won't pass him a grenade or anything. Here, you give him one."

They gave the prisoner a cigaret. He took it, grinned bashfully and, when one of the M. P.'s had given him a light, smoked it coughingly, like any kid.

A FAINT humming began to register on the eardrums of the five men in the road. It was a tremendous sound, but far away, a moaning that seemed to rise from the ground, so that no one could tell its direction. It grew louder, and the whine and boom of it enveloped the whole countryside.

" 'Sthat?" asked an M. P.

"Got me," answered Spike.

The five began to look about them for a place of refuge. The prisoner's eyes were very round and his lips began to lose color, but he let his cigaret droop from his lip and thrust his hands into his great overcoat, while he did his best to appear unconcerned. He would not let these Americans see that he was afraid.

The humming had become louder and beat on the ears like surf on a sea-wall. Men began to cry out, far off, then near, up on the hill in back of the road, down the road, off toward Montfaucon, a half million men called to each other, their voices shrilling and piping in a manner that defies description.

"Hi!" they cried. "Look! look!"

The five men in the road looked overhead.

"Hot dog!" said the four Yanks, with one voice, and the prisoner made a similar remark in his own tongue.

Flying at a good height, yet plainly visible against the gray sky, were a number of planes, nine or ten at least, perhaps more. They spun and circled and twisted about each other like a swarm of gnats, moving always southward toward the American rear.

They were clumped together in a huge ball, and a plane would start at the top of the ball and fall with hair-raising swiftness to the lower side, then turn and climb upward again. And always from the forward part of these twisting planes flew darts of light, red flashes like the sparks from a forge.

"'Sthat?" asked the M. P. again.

"Dog fight," answered Spike. "I saw one on the Marne before. Bunch of Jerry planes meet up with a bunch of ours and they go to it."

The five in the road, as well as the half-million in the fields, continued to watch, their necks growing stiff meanwhile. There was no fire from the ground, either by machine guns or anti-aircraft cannon, for friend and foe were too closely mingled. The roar of all those motors was deafening, then gradually it died, as the battling planes swept on toward the rear of the American lines. Whether the Americans fled, and the Boche pursued, or the Americans herded the Boche away from their own lines, it was impossible to tell.

When the fighters had almost disappeared, the Army cried out again. A spark, larger than those the tracer bullets made, shone brightly in the center of the swirling ball, then shot swiftly to earth, like a flaming match thrown from a window. The fighters disappeared behind the farther hills, but the droning of their motors was audible for some time.

The two armies immediately went to work again with renewed vigor. As if to make up for lost time, the enemy began to shell the road on which Spike stood with the M. P.'s and the youthful prisoner. *Wherram! BONG! Cerrump!* A salvo burst about three hundred yards away. The dust rose in clouds and pebbles rattled. Fragments of shell whined by overhead. The two M. P.'s arose from the ditch.

"Let's get that prisoner back," they said. "He ain't got no business standin' around here."

"Which one of you is goin'?" asked the guard.

The two looked at each other, then down the road to where the dust from the last salvo still hung in the air.

"I guess we better both go," said one of them. "That guy's liable to get savage."

The guard scratched his head and cast a meditative eye at the dust himself. A shell clanged in the field and there were calls for first aid.

"That's right, too," said the guard, settling his steel helmet on his head. "I guess we better all go."

So the three set off, hustling the German along, and they disappeared over the hill, the prisoner with the skirts of his overcoat tucked under his arms, so that they would not impede his walking. Spike hurled himself into the ditch as a shell burst so near that he could feel the rush of air from the explosion. Then he leaped up, and heedless of the dirt that the shell had showered over him, ran at his best speed back to the dugout. Guthrie and Simmons were within, looking very concerned.

"I never expected to see you again," said Simmons. "Did you see that air fight?"

"Sure did," said Spike.

"I'll bet we're in for a little bit of —— now," continued Simmons. "I had an idea that as soon as this mist disappeared, things would begin to happen."

"It'll be worse if the sun comes out," remarked Guthrie.

The sun did not come out. The day continued cloudy and overcast and after dinner the three sat at the door of the dugout and watched troops passing on the road, the ambulances hurrying back with their wounded, and tanks climbing the hill across the road. The road was shelled intermittently and a patch of woods to the right was pounded regularly, but the hill where the battery was in position was left alone. Their turn would come later.

The ration cart came up late in the afternoon and the battery had slum for supper. It was good slum and very filling. It was necessary to pick out the vegetables with a fork and lay them at one side of the mess-kit; otherwise the eater would think he had a mouthful of shrapnel.

The vegetables were dehydrated and had been cooked without previous necessary treatment. This treatment consisted of soaking the vegetables in water for a period of about sixty days, which, of course, could not be done at the front. Unless they were soaked they were like so much wood, and the hardest boiling would not soften them.

But the meat was good and there was lots of bread, and gravy to soak it in, so the battery ate to the bursting point. They never knew whether they would have food for the next meal or not, or whether they would be alive to eat it if they had.

SPIKE had found somewhere an old copy of *La Vie Parisienne*, probably thrown away by some officer, and after supper he stretched himself luxuriously on the blankets under the elephant iron and prepared to read it.

"Isn't this the life?" he inquired. "An' you wonder why I came back to the outfit instead of staying in the S. O. S.! Light up some o' those candles I got in that musette."

Simmons set up three candles and scratched a match. One wick caught, two——

"Hey! Hey!" yelled both Spike and Guthrie.

"Aw, forget it!" said Simmons, and lighted the third candle with the same match.

"Bad stuff," said Guthrie. "We'll get bumped off tonight, sure!"

There was a moment of silence.

"That was a —— fool thing to do," said Spike.

"Huh!" replied Simmons. "I'm not superstitious. That's the wildest, most ignorant fallacy anyway, that the lighting of three cigarets, or three candles— How can three lights from the same match have anything to do with what happens to a man?"

"It's bad luck, all the same," said the other two solemnly.

"It's done now, anyway," added Spike, "so let's look at the magazine."

He pillowed his head on his gas mask, propped against his rolled overcoat and slicker, lighted a cigaret in the flame of the nearest candle and dragged a lungful of smoke into his interior, which he allowed to trickle slowly and in a most delicious manner from his nostrils. After a time he sighed unctuously.

"Oh, man!" he said softly. "Isn't this comfort?"

The other two dozed, puffing their cigarets and waiting patiently until it should come their turn to look at the curved beauties in the magazine.

A hand rasped at the shelter half that covered the entrance. It was torn aside and a voice cried from the darkness—

"Is Spike in there?"

"Yes," said Spike. "What d'yuh want?"

"Come outta that and get yourself into shape. The Old Man wants you to go up with the infantry."

"Right away?" gasped Spike.

"Yeh, right away, an' make it fast. Get an extra gun if you can. There's —— to pay up there and you may need it." The shelter half fell back into place and footsteps crunched away. Spike threw down the *Vie Parisienne* and began to gather his blankets, gas mask and pistol.

"There," he said severely. "I hope you're satisfied. That's what comes o' lighting three candles on one match!"

Then he silently rolled up his blankets, strapped them into his pack carrier, slung his gas mask and belted on his pistol. Then, taking his overcoat over his arm, he crawled out.

"So long," called the other two after him.

"So long," he replied. "See yuh tomorrow."

The sound of his hob-nails grew faint and then vanished entirely. There was silence in the dugout for the better part of an hour. Then Guthrie spoke.

"If Spike don't come back," said he, "I lays claim to half o' them tailor-made cigarets in that musette bag o' his."

II

SPIKE found the captain checking fire-dope with the help of a sergeant and a slide-rule. The dugout boasted of an electric light, run by a battery that had once been part of a projector-signaling outfit.

"The infantry," said the Old Man, "are on the edge of a town about half a mile up the road from here. There's an artillery officer with the regimental P. C.—they'll tell you where it is—and he's been bellyaching for a man all the afternoon. The detail he had are all casualties. Well, you find him and do what he wants you to."

"Are any more men going up, sir?"

"No; the major telephoned for me to send two, but we're rather shy on men right now. I can't afford to lose too many."

Spike went his way down the dark hillside.

"Can't afford to lose too many! How does he get that stuff! Can't afford to lose too many! Don't make me laugh!"

He felt rather lost in that black night. "Up the road," the captain had said. Up what road? Suppose there was a crossroads anywhere along the route?

"Why," thought Spike suddenly, "how dumb I am. All I've got to do is to follow the wire!"

He began to hunt up and down the field, looking for a wire. The battalion command post would be connected with the infantry regimental headquarters by telephone and whatever wire came from the battalion toward the front would be the wire to the infantry, since the batteries in the battalion were all in position on the hill.

Hunting for that wire in the grass was worse than trying to find a needle in a haystack, and when Spike had almost decided to give up, he had another bright thought. If he went down to the road, he might find the wire where it turned off to cross the field. He found it, it and about fifteen others. There was a lot of infantry up that road, and probably more than one wire came back from each headquarters.

"Well, I suppose I might as well start out," said Spike. "All I need to find is a regiment of infantry with an artillery liaison officer that wants some one to help him. I oughtn't to have a hard time."

The road curved after running along the foot of the hill for a way and headed directly north through a cleft in the hills. There was no traffic there, a bad sign, for at night trucks and wagon-trains go up very close to the firing-line and a road must be a —— indeed when night finds it deserted. Spike inspected his wrist watch, cupping his hand about the dial so that he could see the luminous figures.

"Huh!" said he. "Ten o'clock. Now I can make two miles an hour walking on a road at night. 'About half a mile down the road,' says the Old Man. So in fifteen minutes I ought to be there."

A shrill whistle from the darkness froze his blood. He heard a bumping and rattling, with the soft purr of a motor. He hastily took to the ditch, for the sound was coming toward him from the direction of the front. Gradually the purring came nearer and Spike could make out the forms of three ambulances, black bulks in the black night, swaying and bumping along, each with an orderly lying full length on the mudguard, watching the road, and ready to warn the driver of shell holes in the way.

"How far's the doughboys?" cried Spike.

"Bogalile! Whar!" cried the orderly of the last ambulance.

"Yeh, I guess so," muttered Spike. "I bet he used to be a street-car conductor."

He fell over an animal's body as he clambered out of the ditch and his peace of mind was not helped thereby. He stopped to consider for a moment, and all the horror of the black night and his loneliness swept down upon him. Night, pitch dark, an unknown road and a man alone on a battlefield. A shell moaned and then crumped sullenly over on the right somewhere. It was followed by two more. Spike felt the old chills run up and down his back and the rapid pounding of his heart, reactions he had not had since the days on the Marne. He thought of the ambulances that had just passed, loaded with men going back out! Going out! Out to safety and quiet and rest

"The hospital wasn't so bad after all," thought Spike. "At least you could get a night's sleep there."

Spike shook himself mentally and physically.

"Come on," he said aloud. "Brace up, you're an old soldier; you oughtn't to let a few shells get your goat. On your way now, Spike. What's ten minutes? In ten minutes you'll be safe underground at the regimental P. C."

He stumped out bravely down the road, singing softly to himself to show how cool he was.

"Do yuh want to find the doughboys? I know where they are,
I know where they are, I know where they are.
Do yuh want to find the doughboys? I know where they are,
Up to their necks in mud, I saw them
Up to their necks in mud."
"Do yuh wanta find the leathernecks, I know where they are."

He stopped suddenly and looked at his watch. Eighteen minutes! He must be almost there!

"I'd better be careful," whispered Spike. "I better go slow. If they've moved or pulled out, or I'm on the wrong road, I'll find myself in Germany before I know it."

He stopped singing and went on as slowly as he could, trying to keep his hob-nails from scraping on the stones of the road.

The road was very, very lonely. At times it passed across open heaths, at others it plunged down the sides of hills, but mostly it went through woods. There were not many shell holes in the road, for this country had not been fought over since 1914. The American advance, now almost two weeks old, had forced the Germans back into what had once been their rear areas.

Spike did his best to keep down his panic, but the chills still played tag up his spine and his mouth was very dry. The woods were so black, and the night so dark and quiet, and the road so deserted. A distant grumbling of artillery, and far, far off, a faint noise like frying, or the sound one sometimes hears in a telephone. That was all.

Sometimes the breeze rustled the leaves, and Spike would take to the ditch at the sound of it. At such times the distant frying sounded clearer, and Spike decided it was some outfit way off in the woods putting down a machine-gun barrage. Spike consulted his watch again. Half an hour and still no town.

The road curved sharply, and when Spike had carefully peered around the curve, he saw the first houses of a town. They loomed from the darkness with a kind of phosphorescent grayness, their windows black holes such as a missing tooth makes. Silence everywhere. Spike went into the ditch and reconnoitered. It was a small town, as near as he could judge, hardly more than a village. He could make out the bulk of the houses against the black sky.

No sound, no voices, no movement. There would be nothing gained by his staying in the ditch, unless he waited there until daylight, so he laid his overcoat down, unslung his pack and climbed back on the road. Then drawing his revolver, he cautiously entered the town.

III

THE streets were littered with broken stones and bits of wood thrown by the bombardment that had swept the town during its capture by the Americans. Spike halted, his heart pounding, and tried to listen. The blood roared in his ears, and he shook his head to clear them. He had a premonition of immediate danger, of death lurking close at hand in these silent streets.

A stone fell with a sharp sound a few feet away. Came a soft hissing, like that of a snake. With a prodigious bound Spike leaped to the shelter of a flight of stone steps. BANG! A cloud of white smoke rose ghostily from the street and stretched out long arms to the houses on either side.

Spike, no longer afraid now that the hidden menace had disclosed itself, crouched by the steps, trembling with excitement, but peering into the gloom and gripping his revolver, ready to fire at the first thing that moved.

"They'll be out to see if that grenade got me," thought Spike, "an' then I'll get them."

The folly of turning loose a revolver against an unknown number of foes, probably armed with machine guns, did not occur to him. There was a long silence, but not the ominous silence of a moment ago, when Spike had taken his first cautious steps into the town. There were men all about him; he could *sense* them; the disturbance their bodies made in moving through the atmosphere registered upon that fine sixth sense that only operates for humans in moments of greatest danger.

Very, very slowly Spike moved his head so that he could see over one of the stair treads. He felt, rather than saw, a shadow moving across the street. At first he was for emptying his revolver at it; then a more sober consideration told him that he would probably miss and have a shower of grenades about his ears for his pains. He looked again.

Perhaps now—he lay down and, crawling very slowly, crept up to the foot of the stairway, inching along on his belly, feeling before him and moving stones and bits of débris out of his way. Lying close to the ground, he could see around the foot of the stair, but not far. There was too much rubbish on the ground and it was too dark. Spike considered.

"Now either this is where I was supposed to go, and the infantry have retreated, or else I got off the road and come too far. Either way I got to get out and that right *priesa* and toot sweet."

He tightened the chin-strap of his helmet, holstered his pistol and drew his legs under him preparatory to making a slow and cautious retreat back down the road whence he had come. Perhaps he could make a dash for the ditch. He picked up a large stone and tossed it out into the street, where it made a faint rattle. A machine gun went into hysterics immediately; rifles and revolvers barked; the red flash of them came from every window and door in sight; two grenades exploded almost simultaneously; then silence once more.

Spike recoiled, horror stricken.

"Oh, man!" he muttered, "read 'em and weep!"

The machine gun spat again at the sound of his voice.

Spike felt himself over and moved his arms and legs to see if he had been hit during the excitement. There was no suspicious numbness of any part, nor did he feel any blood. His elbow tingled where he had rested it rather hard upon the roadway, but that was his only casualty. He decided that the rise of the stone stairway protected him from fire from the upper end of the street and that the men who fired from the windows opposite were shooting blindly and did not know where he was.

"I'm all right so far," thought Spike. "I may get out of this yet."

He felt no fear now, only an intense desire to kill some of the enemy before he himself was put out of the fighting. Impatiently he kept waving his hand before his face, trying to brush away the blackness.

Golly! They were crawling across the street toward him! Spike rose—oh, so slowly, and carefully—on one knee and just as gently and noiselessly drew his gun. If there was any rushing in prospect, he was ready. Now then, let them come on. They came. The machine-gun stuttered, and at the same moment a cluster of shadows moved forward rapidly, converging towards the stairs where Spike crouched.

He had his gun in action at point blank range. A blind man would have been able to hit those charging men. There were a lot of them and they were very silent, except for grunts. Their feet clumped up and down on the stones. The flash of their pistols criss-crossed the darkness in red streaks.

Spike fired madly; he could swear that he felt flesh at the muzzle-end time and again. He wondered how long this nightmare would last, how many shots he could fire before one of the storm of bullets from those pistols would find him. His brain whirled and his hand ached from firing his pistol. Involuntarily he yelled at the top of his voice:

"Ya-a-a-ay! Come on, —— yuh! Come on!"

The noise increased; then suddenly the enemy was gone. It was a way they had, one moment the roar of an attack, the next silence, a few scattered shots, a little coughing moan, and the rush would be over. Spike marveled that he still lived. Hah! There was one of them! Not four feet away a man crawled on hands and knees. Spike rested his arm on one of the stair treads and took very careful aim.

"Here's one I get," he thought. Slowly he squeezed the trigger. *Click!* Misfire. *Click!* What the ——! *Click! click! click!* With the surge of a mighty sea, the reaction from the strain swept over Spike, black horror engulfed him and his stomach writhed. His strength ran from him like water from a sieve. He lay limply on the hard stones for quite a while, then an inner voice spoke to him.

"You'd better reload that gun, Spike," it said, "and try again."

Spike savagely swung open the cylinder and felt for his ammunition carrier. A revolver of the type carried by the artillery loaded with two clips of three shots each, so that it took but a second to reload, but Spike could have torn his own flesh in vexation. All during that rush he had been banging away with an empty gun. He had emptied the cylinder in the first excitement and after that had not given it a thought, just pulled the trigger. There was so much racket going on that he could not tell that his gun was not making any of it.

"Well, say," thought Spike, "I'm not so bad. I broke up a rush with an empty gun."

But had he? Five shots from a revolver, fired at random, would not stop a crowd of galloping Huns, unless their courage was pretty low. Perhaps they had fired at each other in the darkness. No, that didn't seem reasonable. What kind of Jerries were these, anyway, that made a pistol charge after one man? Spike had never heard of such a thing.

S'pose they were Yanks, huh? Yanks that thought he was a Jerry. He had a moment of panic at that, then he put the thought aside as unreasonable. He knew the men that had rushed him weren't Yanks. The sound of their pistols, the whole conduct of the affair was not American in the slightest degree.

And besides, hadn't he sounded off at the top of his lungs? If the men who had clattered across the dark street had been Americans, they would have known that the man they sought was one of their own countrymen.

Now what should he do? How near daylight was it?

SPIKE looked up at the sky, then turned his head to inspect the house at his back. The white plastered front of it stretched up to the black sky an unbelievable height, or so it seemed to

Spike. A corner of the roof was gone where a shell had wandered through it. There were four windows that Spike could see, those tall, wall-high, French windows, the two on the lower floor protected by ornamental iron work.

A head protruded suddenly from one of the upper windows, a huge pumpkin-shaped thing, black against the white of the wall. Spike's gun went off of its own volition, and a helmet clanged down on the stones.

"By ——," said Spike. "I hit him!"

His groping hand found the helmet. No doubt about its nationality. Just the feel of those little horns on the side, and the smooth shape of it was enough. So there were Jerries in the house in back of him, too. He'd better move and in a hurry, now that he had given away his position.

A bullet struck the wall above his head with a blood-thirsty *thwit!* Spike crawled very gingerly around the end of the stairs, not a second too soon, for a grenade landed in the place he had occupied and barely gave him time to get on the other side of the steps before it burst. There was some firing from the house in back of him and the machine-gun started to pound again.

Spike crawled rapidly backward like a crab, preparing to stave off another rush. Grenades burst, making a noise like a firecracker exploding under a tin can. Spike's legs went off into space. When he got his breath back again, he turned around and saw that he rested upon the edge of a cellar entrance.

"Good enough," he thought. "This is better than the other place I had."

He sneaked quickly down the steps until his head was just level with the roadway and tried to see through the gloom and the dense smoke from the grenades. And then some one sent up a light.

The street was illuminated as by a dozen arc lights. Spike was huddled low at the foot of the stairs, so that he could see nothing, but he would not have been able to see any better had he been at the top—empty, shattered houses, their windows staring blankly like a corpse's eyes, smoke from the grenades twisting and swirling slowly, débris, broken timbers and a few dead. After a long, long time the light went out and all was throbbing darkness again, ten times blacker than before.

Came the gentle creak of a hinge at Spike's back. He turned like a startled cat, but they were too quick for him. Hands seized him; a weight of bodies pressed upon him; there was a knee between his shoulders; his feet were swept from under him and he was jerked along on the back of his neck, bumping his head cruelly on the threshold of the door.

For an instant he was free, and his flailing gun struck flesh, but they were on him again; an arm about his neck cut off his wind; eager hands tore his revolver from his grasp; a boot kicked him in the ribs; men leaped on him with their knees, their hot breaths panted in his face. Spike squirmed and twisted, for he could already feel bayonets searching among his vitals, cold hard bayonets, with a saw-toothed edge. The arm tightened about his throat.

"*Gurp*," choked Spike. "*K-k-amerad!*"

At that they let him go, except a man on either side that pinioned his wrists. He was jerked to his feet and then hauled roughly into the dark.

Spike had a horrid feeling that these men were going to run him full tilt against a post or throw him into a hole somewhere. He did not have, as yet, a full realization of what had happened to him, the blow had fallen so suddenly. The only thought he had as they rushed him through the damp dark was that it reminded him of the time when he had joined the lodge and sooner or later he expected they would come to a halt and some one would say—

"Kneel, neophyte."

He heard a fumbling as at a door; then something swung back, and there was light. Not much, though; just the flame of one candle. Spike squinted, but his eyes could not stand the light, and he could not see his captors clearly, although he could hear them breathing. In two seconds, or three seconds, he was able to look at the men who had dragged him in to the cellar.

One candle does not give much light and at the most all he could see was a leg here and an arm there, protruding from the shadows. He looked to his right and then blinked. He looked again. No mistake. A man sat there at a table, wearing a trench coat, a gas mask and a tin hat, all of American pattern.

Spike looked wildly around. Faces surrounded him, outlined by shadow. He could see a chevroned arm, but there was no word spoken. His captors gazed silently at Spike, their eyes wide and their mouths open. So he'd been shooting at Yanks after all! But the Boche helmet——

"I thought this would end up in some kind of a fool mess like this," remarked Spike bitterly.

"What brings you here, little stranger?" asked the man at the table.

"A guy in my dugout took three lights from the same match," answered Spike.

The men in the shadows thought on this remark for some time. Then one spoke.

"He's probably balmy from shell-fire," said he.

"Where did you get it?" asked the man at the table, turning to one of the men that still held Spike by the wrist.

"Me and Lieutenant McNally were peekin' out the little window to see what all the shootin' was about. We heard someone scratchin' at the door, and we thought they were tryin' to put a bomb under it. Then a light went up, and the lieutenant said there was only one man out there, and let's capture him. So we got some of the fellars out in the cellar and grabbed him. He near caved in the Greek's skull with his gun while we was fightin' with him."

"But he's an American," objected the man at the table.

"I see he is," said the other man, "but we didn't know it then. Anyway, what's he doin' in a town full o' Boche?"

"What organization do you belong to?" asked the man at the table.

Spike told him. He also told him the name of his commanding officer, regimental and battalion. He told them his mission and how he had come into the town, not forgetting a vivid account of his gun fight with the Germans across the street.

"Do you mean to tell us," spoke up a voice from the shadows, "that those Boche shot at you all that time, machine-gun, grenade and rifle, and that you weren't hit?"

"That's what," said Spike.

"I think he's a spy," said this voice. "You'd better search him." They searched Spike, but found nothing in his pockets except a flashlight, a steel trench-mirror and a package of cigarets.

"You came up to spend the night without blankets, I presume?" continued the same mysterious voice.

"My pack's out in the ditch," said Spike desperately.

He began to realize that he was in wrong, for these men were all strangers to him. He did not even know what regiment they were supposed to belong to.

"Where did you land in France?" someone else asked.

"Bordeaux," said Spike.

"His division landed at Brest," said another voice. "I was R. T. O. when they went through."

"I was a casual," cried Spike.

"Oh, you were," said the man at the table. "And where did you go after you landed?"

"La Courtine."

"Who's in command there?"

"'Spike' Hennesy."

Tension relaxed at that answer, the officer mentioned being quite well known, and Spike felt a bit more at ease.

"How do you remember that so well?"

"He's got the same name as I have," said Spike, "and he put me in the mill for not knowin' my serial number, when I'd only got it that morning."

Some one laughed and the man at Spike's side let go his wrist. "I guess we can take a chance on him," said the man at the table. "He seems to be all right. You can't blame us for being suspicious," he continued, turning to Spike. "We're all alone here and Germans in American uniform are very common these days. And when a man tells us he fought his way in here with nothing but a pistol, we're liable to be a bit incredulous."

"Who's got this town, anyway?" asked Spike.

"The Germans," said the man. "By the way, how much ammunition have you got?"

Spike inspected his ammunition carrier.

"About six rounds," he said.

"That's not much," said the man at the table thoughtfully, "but it will help. We're liable to have to make a stand sometime before daylight. Will you go out with him, sergeant, and see if you can find his gun?"

SPIKE and one of the men that had brought him in went out of the lighted room into the dark cellar.

"What the —— is all this about?" asked Spike as soon as the door had closed and they were feeling their way down a damp passageway.

"That's Colonel Barker in there," said the other man, "with the gas officer, a doctor and a French captain. There's some looey from C Company there, too. I'm regimental color sergeant. There's a signal corps sergeant here and three orderlies and another looey in the outside cellar. We're the garrison of this town."

"Where's the rest of your outfit?" asked Spike in bewilderment.

"We'd like to know ourselves," answered the man shortly.

Spike sensed that he was on thin ice and said no more. The other man continued, though, as if in answer to an unspoken question.

"They pulled out," he said bitterly, "for the blank, dashed, cowardly, double-starred asterisks they were; pulled out they did, horse, foot and one-pounders, and Jerry come in and took the town. This house was the P. C., and the old man went out and tried to stop 'em, but he had a snowball's chance. He was out in the street, poppin' at the Boche with an automatic, when we dragged him down cellar, and here we are."

They went into the cold of the outer cellar then, and men stirred and muttered at the sound of their hob-nails on the stones.

"Hey, that was an American gun that Jerry had," cried some one in a guarded whisper.

"I know it," answered the sergeant major. "That lad was a Yank artilleryman. All a mistake. Give the guy his gun."

"Olla mistake he splita my skull, huh?" Whereat the darkness echoed with snickering.

"That must be the Greek," Spike thought.

"Shut up," said a stern voice. "Something's coming off up here." There was instant silence. There was a very tiny barred window at the upper end of the cellar, by the door, and some one, evidently the lieutenant, stood on a chair and kept watch out of it. Spike could barely see the outline of the officer's helmet, turning now to the right, now the left, as its wearer tried to see up and down the street. Spike shivered, for it was very cold in the cellar.

The officer got hastily down from his chair.

"There's somebody upstairs," he exclaimed. "Every one get ready. They'll probably try to break down the door!"

Spike had not the slightest idea of where the threatened door was, but he went where he could see the greatest scrambling, and here it was that he judged a door from the upper part of the house opened. Every one was very silent now, but there was a good deal of heavy breathing. Then a shock passed through all the listeners. Feet shuffled overhead — *shf-shf-shf* — silence. Another *shf-shf-shf*—silence.

"The back door," cried the officer. "The back door! They're going out! Open the door, —— —— it, open the door and let's get 'em."

Hurried exclamations, rattling, shuffling, scraping of feet, panting, clatter of a bar taken down, the creak and squeal of rusty hinges, then a cold blast of air. Spike was borne out into the darkness with the rush and fell over a chair or a box or something that was just outside the door. He landed in some high weeds or an old flower bed, very wet. He got hastily to his feet, and some one running knocked him headlong again.

There was a crash, panting, the pound of feet on the stairway from the house; bodies thudded together; a voice cried out in German; creaking and the thud of blows from the stairs. Spike struggled to his knees and felt a cautious hand pass over his back. *Bam!* Spike saw stars, and his head rocked. Birds began to twitter, and a dim mist seemed to rise and lift him from the ground.

Sleep, sleep, he was going, going—a sharp pain in his jaw stabbed him back to full consciousness, and immediately he lusted for blood. If he could find the Jerry that had kicked him, Lord pity him. Up he leaped, rocked a second or two, then charged into the dark with hooked fingers. He met an antagonist at the third jump, a Hun, for the smell of him was strong. They clinched, and Spike pounded the Jerry over the kidneys.

Crash! The stair clattered to ruin; some one cried out horridly; there were gagging sounds, fearful strangling chokes, from the wet weeds a few feet away. Spike felt for his enemy's eyes and got a bitten thumb instead. He leaped back convulsively with the pain of it and so escaped a quickly upraised knee that would have finished him properly. Feet stamped in the wreckage of the stairway; there were blood-curdling sounds, half-gasp, half-moan, the *thud-thud* of blows and the scratch of twisting feet on gravel.

Spike bored in again, hooking left and right to the German's body, but the dark hindered his aim, and moreover the German was reaching for Spike with all eagerness; so the two collided again and again, chest to chest. Spike tried to get a wrestler's hold and heave the other man over his shoulder, but the other was twice as big as Spike, as the Yank soon found to his dismay.

Moreover, Spike was weakening rapidly, but he redoubled his blows, putting into them every ounce of strength he could. Suddenly he broke away and turned to flee. The German, grunting satisfaction, rushed in pursuit and fell over Spike's kneeling form. Spike was upon the sprawling German at once, feet foremost.

"Whuff!" said the Jerry.

Spike grabbed for the throat, but his hands were torn away. Not empty, however, for one of them clutched the chin strap of the other's helmet and off came the helmet. Spike swung it high over his head and brought it down with all his might. *Blam!*

"There!" said Spike. "I bet that spoiled that helmet."

The form under Spike's knees was still.

Feet pounded in the grass, straining figures collided heavily with Spike and then fell over him, an iron-shod heel ringing on his helmet. The fighters were up again and Spike, reaching out his arm, felt high leather boots. He encircled a boot with both arms and jerked the leg from the ground. He pinioned a wildly flailing arm, and then it was torn from his grasp, and the fighter rolled away from him. Spike lay down, for he could just gasp for breath, and he suffered a great deal of pain. He had got his man; let the rest get theirs. He'd be obliged if some one would come along and put a trench knife in him and end it all.

WHEN he got back his wind, Spike rose to one knee, listening for sounds of conflict. There were none, only a gentle moaning, a sound of some one stirring in the wreckage of the staircase and a scrape as of a body being dragged over the ground. Spike arose and staggered in the direction of the house.

"Who's there?" asked a hoarse voice.

"Friend," said Spike, quickly.

"Give me a hand with this looey, will you?" said the voice.

Spike put out his hand, it was seized by another and guided to a body. Spike took the feet and together the two men got the officer inside the cellar. One followed them, and they challenged him. His accent showed him to be the Greek.

"Lay the looey down," said the voice, "while I go get the doctor."

Then the man went off, while Spike and the Greek drew their guns and stood guard by the open door.

The doctor, accompanied by all the rest of the officers, judging by the sound of feet, came running down the passage.

"Shut the door," he commanded, "and put something over that window."

When this was done he inspected the wounded officer with a flashlight.

"Get me a blanket, will you?" he asked.

There were no blankets forthcoming, but some one brought an overcoat. The doctor's flashlight went out and they could hear him spreading the overcoat over the officer's body. Somebody whispered an inquiry.

"Incised wound," answered the doctor. "Bayonet or knife, I couldn't tell which. Any more hurt?" No answer.

"What's all this about?" asked the colonel. "How did we get snarled up with the Germans? Were they trying to dig us out?"

"We heard them upstairs," said the sergeant major, "and then the lieutenant said to open the back door and go out and get them. He heard them going out the back way."

The colonel made an exclamation of impatience, but said nothing. The officer responsible for the sally was dead, and so recriminations would be useless. It was, of course, the wildest folly for the Americans to disclose themselves to a body of Germans, unless they could capture all of them, for any who got away would return with reinforcements and either bomb the garrison of the cellar to death or put a heavy guard around the place and starve them out.

"How many men were in this thing?" asked the colonel.

"There was me an' the lieutenant, that new guy, the Greek and Sodergren and Healy."

"How many are left?"

"I'm here," said Spike. "I'm the artilleryman."

"I'm here oll aright," said the Greek. "Dose other wan is outside."

"Let's go out," said the colonel.

So the door was opened, and the whole garrison went out into the backyard.

"Show a light now," said the colonel. "Let 'em shoot at us if they want to, but we've got to get these men in."

There were three bodies there, two Germans and an American. One German lay under the wreckage of the stair and was already beginning to cool. The other one was also dead, but how he had come to his end they could not tell. The American had been stabbed, and him they carried into the cellar and laid down beside the officer.

"Any more?" asked the colonel.

"There ought to be one around here somewhere," answered Spike, "that I crowned with a helmet. Oh, here you are! Git up, you! Raus mit him! *Achtung!* Or however the —— you say it! Up on your feet, or I'll blow your conk off!"

The others lent assistance and dragged Spike's late antagonist to a standing position. This last held his head and muttered.

"He was sittin' there talkin' to himself," said Spike. "Probably he ain't all awake yet."

"Where's Healy?" asked the sergeant major suddenly.

Healy was not to be found. They hunted up and down the garden and even went out into the little road at the back, but found no trace of him.

"I guess they've carried him off," decided the colonel. "Let's go back into the cellar and find out from our prisoner what this was all about."

They went away into the inner cellar this time and then shut the door. Two more candles were lighted and Spike could see clearly, for the first time, the members of the garrison. The colonel was tall and thin, but very efficient-looking. The French captain wore no helmet or overcoat and had a stubby black moustache. The other two officers Spike easily classified. The gas officer he knew, because he wore boots, and C Company's lieutenant because he was very, very dirty, with a ragged old trench coat plastered with mud. His helmet had a rawhide cord on it, so that when he knocked it off to put on his gas mask it wouldn't fall into the mud.

THE prisoner was a stocky, strongly built man; his hair was black and short, and his black eyes snapped. He wore a well-fitting gray blouse that was spattered with blood from a gash on his head, where Spike had smitten him. The French officer began to question him, but he maintained a sturdy silence. The colonel and the French officer exchanged glances, and then they nodded slightly to the Greek.

"There's nothing to be gained from him," said the colonel, speaking loudly and clearly. "Let us go out and leave him to our Indian friend."

Here the Greek gave a piercing howl and whipping a knife from his shirt began to whet it on his shoe. Then he began to stamp and caper, waving his knife and howling.

"Not so loud," admonished the gas officer. "You'll have the whole town down on us."

"Let him hoot," said the colonel. "You could fire a field gun in here and not hear it upstairs."

The officers made a show of going out and the prisoner looked rather nervous. He asked a question. The French officer replied by drawing his finger around the base of his skull and then tugging at his hair, intimating that the German was about to be scalped.

The Greek grinned fiendishly and wiggled his knife. The prisoner spoke again, intimating that he had changed his mind, and the gas officer went through a mock struggle to get the knife from the Greek. The sergeant major went outside to laugh, and the French officer questioned the prisoner at length. Then he turned to the colonel.

"This man," said the French officer, "was a member of a patrol from the One Hundred and Forty-Seven Infantry. They are a bad bunch, that regiment; that's the von Hindenburg regiment, you know. They came in here to see if the town was occupied. They went into a house lower down the street and found a machine gun crew from the Hundred and Twenty Fif'.

"The machine gunners told them there were Americans in the upper end of the street. They came up to this house and went into the *rez de chausée*, when they heard movement in the street. They threw a bomb and very soon there was machine-gun fire, so they went into the next floor above. Here they could look down into the street and see any one crossing the road, because of the whiteness of the street. So they saw some crawling and fired at them with their rifles and threw bombs at them and drove them back across the street again. He says these men across the street had a machine gun.

"The *feldwebel* in command of the patrol looked into the street to see if he could see any wounded and some one shot him. Then they put up a light to see who had shot the *feldwebel* and they saw that all the bodies in the street—four or five he says—were Germans. Then they knew that they had fired on their own troops and thought it well to go away from there as fast as they could. There were twelve men in the patrol. He said the fight started as soon as they got out the back door."

"And five men jumped on twelve! It's a wonder they weren't all killed. Is the prisoner hurt?"

"He says his head aches."

"Fix him up, will you doctor? Sergeant major, take him outside after he's been treated and see that he doesn't get away. That was a good job, artilleryman, to capture that big Hun."

Spike grinned bashfully. He agreed with the colonel, but not aloud.

"What regiments are these you're talking about?" asked the colonel, after the prisoner had been led into outer darkness.

"The Hundred and Twenty Fif', that is now holding the town, is from the Second Landwehr division. They are poor troops. The Thirty-Seven' that the Hundred and Forty-Seven infantry belongs to are a first-class shock division, as good as the Boche have. They are from East Prussia and did their fighting in Russia at the beginning of the war. I don't know how the two divisions got into the same town, unless their sectors overlap or the patrol the prisoner was from was lost. I suppose the men across the street thought we were trying to escape and rushed the house."

"Why do you suppose, if the Germans know that we are here, that they don't make a more vigorous effort to capture us?" asked one of the officers.

"Probably they don't think we're worth the trouble. I don't think they know exactly where we are and they don't want to prowl around these streets in the dark looking for us. Of course, if they thought they heard some one out in the street, as they undoubtedly did hear this artilleryman, they'd rush out and try to capture him."

"Isn't it strange," spoke up the doctor, "that there are only a few machine guns left in the town? Doesn't that indicate that the Boche have retired?"

The entire garrison regarded the medical man with pity. It was plain that he was a newcomer on the field of battle.

"When the enemy take a town," explained the colonel, "as soon as they have mopped it up, they retire immediately, to escape the heavy bombardment that the other side will begin directly they learn that the town has changed hands. They leave a few machine guns behind to keep out patrols and give warning of an advance in force. In the latter event, the enemy throws his main body into the town again. We'll probably see how it works in the morning when my command returns. Who's got a cigaret?"

Spike proffered his tailor-mades and then passed them around to the others, who accepted eagerly. The lieutenant from C company, whose name was Clark, produced matches and offered the colonel a light. Then he lighted the French captain's. Spike watched breathlessly. Lieutenant Clark move toward the gas officer, then seemed to remember something. He blew out the match and took one of the candles from the table.

"Here you are," he said. "Three on a match is bad luck."

Spike exhaled a noisy sigh of relief.

"I'll say it is!" he agreed.

"What's our next move?" asked the gas officer, blowing clouds of smoke.

"You say the enemy in the town here are poor troops?" the colonel inquired, turning to the French captain.

"Ah, well, perhaps I said that too rashly. The Second Landwehr is a fourth-class division, composed mostly of Wurtembergers. They belong to the Argonne group of divisions and have been in this section of the fighting front since the commencement. They are not poor troops; they have a good morale, but they are not an assault division."

"Well, then, if what you say is correct, what is to prevent a few energetic Americans, from a division whose rating is of the highest, from going across the street and taking that gun? Why not?"

"Sure," cried the gas officer. "I'd like to see some action, so I would. I've been yearning for a chance to get to grips with some of the sauerkraut ruiners ever since I got to France. I'm game!"

"I don't know that I'm enthusiastic about it," said the officer from C company, putting his ragged trench coat over a hole in the knee of his breeches. "I've been bucking machine guns since yesterday morning and I assure you that it's not the easiest job in the world. However, I'll follow the crowd."

"What do you think about it?" the colonel asked the French officer.

"My colonel," said the Frenchman, "I am inclined to agree with the last speaker. The attack of a machine gun is a very serious thing. *Epuis alors*, I am under your command and shall lend my assistance to any project you favor. They may, after all, surrender without resistance. They can not tell, if we get after them before dawn, how many of us there are."

"I don't believe," said the colonel, "that men who would retire in the face of such feeble fire as they must have received from this house can be very fierce. Our artilleryman here went through all that affair and was not hit, so that machine gun can not be very efficient. Anyway, I can see no advantage in our sitting here like a lot of rats in a hole, waiting to be dug out. Once we have a machine gun, we can put up some kind of a resistance in case any more patrols come in here. Let's prepare and then let's go. Run out and tell the sergeant major to tie up that prisoner; we'll have to take him with us."

Spike went into the outer cellar and informed the sergeant major that the colonel was going across the street after the machine gun over there.

"What'll I do with this Jerry?"

"Put him in the inside cellar and lock the door on him," advised Spike.

THE rest of the garrison came down the passage, and the colonel agreed to the method of disposing of the prisoner. After he had been put into the inner room, and the door blocked shut with a timber, the French officer mounted the chair by the window and reconnoitered.

"I can not see a thing," said he when he got down again, "but it rains heavily. There are no lights being sent up and no sweeping fire, which leads one to believe that there are alarm wires spread in the road or trip flares or some other device to give warning of an approach. Did you come straight up the road and into the town that way?" he asked Spike.

"Yes, sir."

"When did the machine gun fire the first time?"

"When I threw the stone out in the street."

"Then this gun has no alarms out, but is to fire into the rear of any party attacking the positions down the street. So much the better."

"What floor do you suppose it is on?" asked the colonel.

"It might be anywhere, from the cellar to the roof," said the officer in the ragged coat. "Let's hope there's only one. Those things are like snakes. After you kill one, you've got to be careful its mate doesn't get you the next minute."

"Well, open the door, and let's go," said the colonel.

"Wait! Wait!" cried the French officer and the lieutenant together. "You can't go out after a machine gun like that! My ——!"

"We've got to dope out some kind of a plan," said the American from C company. "Flankers, you know, and all that sort of stuff."

"Well, hurry then," said the colonel impatiently. "It will be daylight before we start."

"No," objected the gas officer. "It's only four o'clock, and we'll have two hours anyway before it gets light enough to see."

"I think we ought to make a thorough reconnaissance," said the French officer, "with a view to seeing if there is a way into the rear of the building."

"Who's to make it?" asked the colonel.

"Well, we have three sous-officers here. Can we not send them?"

"There are only two, and one of them is from the signal corps, so that I doubt if he has the technical knowledge necessary. If you want to establish a telephone station, he's your man, but I doubt if he's much of a scout."

"Look," said the colonel, speaking more animatedly, "why not go at this in regular style? Let the doctor set up a dressing station, the gas officer prepare a memo on gas defense, you, captain, provide for liaison with the French troops, the signal-corps man lay out a phone system, the artilleryman locate a few concentration points and draw a barrage map for his battery to fire from. I'll take general charge of operations and have Lieutenant Clark as my aid."

"Don't liva me out," spoke up the Greek.

"We'll use you for a runner," said the colonel.

"That would leave no one to take the gun," objected the French officer.

"That's just the point," cried the colonel. "There'd be no one to take the gun. I don't think any one here is very eager to take it, anyhow."

The other officers assured him that they were very eager to rush forth, but that there was no use in being killed. They told the colonel that it took finesse to capture a machine gun without heavy casualties. There was no disputing them on that point. There was a good deal of discussion about the best method of approach, and much regret was expressed because there were no bombs to be had.

The Greek and the two non-coms sat and shivered. They were bored to tears and had not the slightest idea of what the discussion was all about. One thing they were quite sure of, that if there was any dirty work to be done, they'd do it. Spike gave up all hope of sleep.

The door was opened by the French officer and he and the gas officer crept out to the foot of the cellar stairs, while some deep point was explained.

"Gentlemen," cried the colonel, "you remind me of the Fourth Field Artillery's picket line, a bunch of jackasses braying back and forth and getting nowhere. As for me, I'm going after that gun."

THIS feet clattered up the stair, he collided loudly with the two officers, who exclaimed, and then was gone. Spike dashed for the door and was jammed against the sill by some one else trying to get out. Up they went, in a rush of feet.

"After him, everybody," cried a voice.

"Straight across the street!" cried another, and the whole garrison departed at their best speed.

Spike felt the cold of the open air on his face, a dash of rain and the loose stones and bits of plaster turning under his running feet. At every jump he expected to hear the barking of a gun, and he thought he had never crossed a street so wide. The next instant he was tearing up four or five steps from the street into a black hall, and he heard the gun go into action as he crossed the threshold. *Pupupupupupup!* Down the hall he tore, through a door on the right, into a room. They were in that room! Hot dog, what a reek!

The gun stopped, and he heard loud, fearful voices.

"*Kamerade!*" they cried. "*Kameraden hier, als kameraden!*"

A light went up in the street and shone through the great hole in the front of the room that had been a window. There was a light machine gun on the floor by the window, the colonel holding a man by the collar, and five or six others getting up from a pile of blankets against the wall and elevating their hands. Spike wondered at the rain glistening in the white light of the flare. It looked like snow.

The light lasted long enough for Spike, the colonel, and the French officer to line their prisoners up and search them. The Americans also discovered a nice pile of grenades, just the thing they needed. Then the light went out. Very shortly the rest of the men came down from up-stairs, where they had gone to make sure the upper stories were untenanted, and the whole party gathered in the front room, flushed with success, exulting at their easy victory.

"Ask one of those men where the other guns are," directed the colonel.

The French officer complied.

"They say that there is one on the other side of the street, about half-way down to the square, over a butcher shop. They think there are others in the town, but they don't know where. They are only sure of the one. We had better go back to our old place, rather than stay here. There's not much overhead cover, and we might get some shelling later on."

"That's very true," said the colonel, "but there is something we must do first."

"What's that?" cried three or four at once.

"Why, we'll have to go get those other machine guns."

There was a dull silence, and the Jerries could be heard shuffling their feet where they stood against the wall.

"We captured this gun by luck," said the officer from C company, "and because its crew were asleep. The others will be on the job now, and they've got trip wires out, too. There, what did I tell you?"

Another light gleamed from the street.

"Good!" exclaimed the colonel. "Issue out those grenades; we'll go get the butcher shop first, because I think we can get at that from the rear. Have some one take these prisoners into the cellar and then rejoin us. Put them with the other one."

Spike and the sergeant major went into the hall.

"Ain't this ——," said Spike. "I think the old boy's gone nuts!"

"I know he has," said the sergeant major. "Do you notice how he keeps talking about his command coming back? He thinks they only went down the road after a drink or something."

"Well, it'll be over soon, anyway," said Spike. "We won't get far with that butcher-shop gun, I'm tellin' yuh. An' say, what's the low-down on this grandstand play by that Greek about scalpin' the Jerry? How come that?"

"Huh! That's a stunt the colonel thought up when we were in Lorraine. We'd get a prisoner, and he wouldn't say a word, so they trained the Greek to pretend he was an Indian and wanted to scalp the Jerry. It works pretty good, only they got an officer once who told the Greek to go ahead and scalp."

"So yuh didn't get no dope from him?"

"Sure we did. We took his bootjack that he had under his coat away from him and told him he couldn't have it back unless he talked. He did. He knew he couldn't get his boots off without the jack unless he cut 'em off, and then he'd have to go barefoot quite some spell before he got another pair. So he came across with the dope. It was mostly a bunch o' lies. You can't believe a prisoner very much."

"I wonder if the ones we got tonight put anything over on us," said Spike thoughtfully.

"We'll find out before morning," said the sergeant major.

"Did it ever strike you," continued the sergeant major, "that that bunch we had the scrap with in the garden got away and took Healy prisoner? That bird we got said they came up here to see if the town was occupied. They'll go back and say it is, and show Healy for proof. Then probably their whole gang will come back here with blood in their eye. And the French guy said they were a hard-boiled outfit."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Spike. "By ——, I wish it would come daylight. Well, I know why I'm here, and if I get out alive, Baldy Simmons, I'll knock you for a row of brick gools!"

And Spike smote one hand into the palm of the other with a loud smack.

Some one came into the hall and took the two men by the arms. By his voice, they knew it was the French officer.

"Come with me, boys," he said. "We are about to do a little something special. The colonel and the rest are going to cover us with the machine gun, you and I and this electrician sergeant."

"Uncle Sam," muttered Spike, "kiss good-by to ten thousand dollars. My mother collects my insurance tonight."

Then they went out into the street and lay down in the mud.

IV

THEY lay in the mud a long, long time, while the rain soaked through the back of Spike's blouse and the mud soaked through the front. It didn't take very long for the mud to reach his skin; it seemed hardly a minute before he felt it on his ribs, like an icy hand. Spike had not the slightest idea why they were lying there, but he was perfectly content to do so. It was better than charging machine guns.

Finally a flare went up, and Spike squirmed closer to the ground, expecting every minute to hear a gun rattle, but they were not seen and the light went out after a time. Still the officer made no forward move. He had not told his plans to the two men, so of course they could not know that he was trying to see where the lights were coming from and also get an idea of the lie of the land, when there was a light up to illuminate things.

As long as the lights went up, it showed that the Germans were nervous, but they kept mum with their guns. If there was a large force in the other end of the town—the Germans had suspicions of there being Americans there anyway, as the prisoner had said—it would be poor policy to fire unless they knew what they were shooting at, for they would give away the fact that there were only two guns there.

Suddenly the officer began to crawl backward and the other two followed him. They went into the house again and found the rest of the garrison sitting in the hallway, explaining to the doctor how to operate a pistol they had taken from one of the Germans.

"How goes it?" asked the colonel.

"I think it's useless to wait any longer," answered the French officer. "They won't put up any more lights. There is a row of trip flares across the street a little way down and I know where the lights come from. We can do this thing very well alone; we will not need that gun at all."

"How do you work these grenades?" asked the gas officer.

"Unscrew that thing on the bottom and pull out the cord. Then throw it. Forward, men."

Spike and the two non-coms followed to the back of the house.

"We go out here," said the officer, and after some search, he found the doorway.

It was plugged with an old chest of drawers and a mattress, put up perhaps by the machine gunners, perhaps by the Germans when the town had been theirs before. This was pulled down and the four men crept out into the fields.

"This way," said the officer, leading them through the darkness.

Here they were on grass and could not follow the sound of his footsteps.

"Where the —— is he?" panted the sergeant major in Spike's ear.

"Here, here!" whispered the officer.

He stretched out his hand and seized Spike's arm.

"Take hold of my blouse," he directed.

So, Spike holding the tail of the officer's blouse, the sergeant major clinging to Spike's pistol belt and the signal corps sergeant bringing up the rear, the party proceeded, bending almost double and scarce daring to breathe.

The rain fell heavily, but the men paid no attention to it. They were all as wet as if they had been dumped in a pond and could get no wetter. They crept along through an orchard, keeping parallel to the row of houses, and Spike wondered how far they were going. It seemed as if they had been crawling for hours. His back ached prodigiously. His head drooped with fatigue, for his neck was tired with holding the weight of the helmet at such an unnatural angle.

Clank! Spike's helmet struck a tree. The officer stopped and every one lay down without command. They listened. The rain pattered on the trees; water ran down Spike's neck; he could hear the sergeant major breathing, but there was no other sound. After a long while the officer started forward again.

Tacktacktacktack! Down again they went, at that sudden clatter from the dark. Silence. The signal corps sergeant spoke for the first time that night.

"I'm done," he said. The other two heard the sergeant major, heedless of danger, go to the wounded man's assistance, heard his blouse being unbuttoned, the rip of a shirt being torn. After a time the sergeant major crept back again.

"Go on," he said. "He is gone."

They heard him wiping his hands on the grass. The gun clattered again. It was out in the field and not in the town, and a flying stone stung Spike on the cheek, so that he thought he had been hit. He was disappointed when he felt no blood.

The officer turned and began to go back toward the houses, and the other two followed, the gun hounding them. They could hear the bullets striking the houses and ticking against the trees. Would they never get back to those houses? They did finally, and into a basement full of water that reached half-way to their knees.

BERRAM! The house shook, and little bits of plaster fell from the walls, rattling on the floor overhead and splashing into the water in the basement.

"There," said the officer huskily, "let's hurry. It must be getting daylight. Let us hurry. The Boche will all take to their holes after that shell."

BERRAM! Spike very nearly threw himself into the water on the floor. The house actually trembled, and more plaster fell. Broken tiling clanked into the street. The officer splashed around in the darkness.

"*Voici l'escalier*," he cried. "Follow me."

He began to mount the stairs into the upper part of the house.

"The frog's crazy!" cried the sergeant major.

"Yeh, they're all crazy," agreed Spike. "Cheer up; we'll soon be dead."

A shell struck in the fields, its wild shriek ending in a sullen hiss. The soft ground, saturated with water, would not explode the fuse. Another struck in the street. No dud, this one, and through the glassless windows the wind of the burst fanned their faces. The officer continued to climb, and they heard his feet clattering over the boards of the second story.

"Up we go," said Spike. "We'll be nearer heaven, and the angels won't have so far to carry us."

They climbed on, up to the garret, where they could make out a network of beams against a paling sky.

"Lie down," whispered the French officer, "it will be daylight in fifteen minutes, and then we shall see several things."

They crept into a corner that a few tile still protected from the rain, and here they lay down. Spike, wet as he was, fell instantly asleep and was awakened the same second, so it seemed to him. It was much later, though. It was very light, and they could see the wreaths of mist curling over the shattered roof. The French officer beckoned them, and they crawled to the edge of the floor. He pointed silently downward.

AT THE lower end of the town was a road fork, one going off to the right, another to the left, forming a Y. At the intersection of the roads was a church, or rather the ruins of one. A church tower makes an excellent registration point for artillery, and for that reason churches are short-lived. This one was but a shell, its door blocked up with fallen masonry and all trace of bell-tower and roof gone.

Over the door, behind what had once been a rose window, was a rude platform, built of broken stones, and upon this platform was the gun, its crew lying beside it. Spike counted eight men lying there, huddled under tent-half and overcoat, waiting for the unwary to appear in the street.

This gun had a wide field of fire and could not only sweep the street throughout its length but could also command the other gun in the butcher-shop, in case the butcher-shop should be taken.

The French officer pointed silently to the right, across a great hole where the floor of the garret went off into space, out across the fields, where the right-hand road wandered off in to the fog.

"More guns out there," he whispered.

Shells were falling regularly now, but the gun that was firing them had shifted its aim, and they were dropping into the field, where most of them failed to explode.

A sharp intake of breath from the sergeant major startled the other two. They looked into the church again. The gun crew was aroused; they had thrown off their coverings and were peering at something below them. The gun began to pound, and the French officer swore softly to himself. Followed by the other two men, he ran to the edge of the roof toward the main street and looked down.

Spike could see nothing but the gray road, all littered with broken stones and splintered tile and the gaping windows of the houses. There was one with a greater expanse of blackness then the rest, and across the front of it was painted in black the words, "Charcuterie," almost obliterated now by the rains of four years.

"There they are!" said the sergeant major and pointed. Beyond the house with the black sign were three bodies. "That's Lieutenant Clark," he went on, "I can tell him by his trench coat." It was impossible to tell who the other two were.

The officer muttered to himself in his own tongue for a time; then he turned to Spike.

"Ah, you Americans!" said he. "Impatience! Impatience! Will you never learn? Regard," he cried, his English not so perfect in his excitement, "that which does the machine gun. Ah, *les pauvres*, they could not wait until we should make the reconnaissance."

The French officer drew them back to the other side, where they could see down into the church again. The gun was barking loudly, sweeping up and down the street, searching among the houses, behind the heaps of fallen masonry, anywhere that an American might be hiding. At the officer's signal, each of the Americans took a grenade from his belt and prepared it for firing.

"*Attendez!*" said the officer. "When I count three, let them go and be sure of your aim. If we miss—finish!"

They swung their grenades, one, two, three—down! The three grenades swooped downward in a beautiful arc.

"Good shot, boy!" Spike cried in his excitement.

The grenades disappeared behind the church wall, but it was plain that they would fall directly on the platform under the rose window. *Babablam!* A great cloud of white smoke gushed from the rose window, rose over the broken wall, and hung heavily before the church.

"Now!" cried the officer, and the three took to their heels down the crazy stair. Outside the house they stopped, knelt at the corner and drew their guns, the officer producing a child's size automatic that looked as if it would not kill a mosquito. The church loomed before them, its wall much higher and twice as threatening as it had appeared from the garret, but the officer dashed across the road and the others followed, going through a gap in the wall near the corner.

They listened. No sound but the drip-drip of water somewhere. Or was it something else that dripped? They began to climb the side of the platform and finally reached the top. The smoke had cleared away and the bodies of the gun crew lay there motionless.

The officer examined the gun.

"*Ca marche j'pense,*" he muttered, then turned and began to roll the Germans over the edge of the platform.

Spike chuckled.

"What the —— are you laughing about?" snarled the sergeant major. "Have you lost what few brains you ever had?"

"It's one thing or the other," said Spike. "I got to laugh or cry, and I'd rather laugh."

"Now then," said the officer, "for those pigs in the butcher-shop."

He lay down and trained the gun carefully. He had some difficulty in getting it going, but finally it began to cough. It was answered immediately from the upper end of the town, where Spike had entered. *Rapraprapraprap* from a machine gun. *POW!* A one pounder shell burst below them. An auto rifle barked.

"Oh, ——, look!" cried the sergeant major.

At the farther end of the street was a yellow blob in the grayness—a whippet tank. Four, five men in olive drab skulked among the houses. The machine gun rattled, and the auto rifle barked again.

"Hey!" yelled Spike, at the top of his voice. Cease firing. Yanks! Yanks!"

Then he and the sergeant major, regardless of the danger of broken legs, leaped from the platform to the ground and ran out into the street, their arms held high over their heads.

"Hey! Hey!" they yelled. "Lay off, we're Yanks! Lay offa that gun."

The firing stopped. The two started down the street toward the tank; then with one move they ducked into a house like rabbits going to earth. Several gray figures had appeared at a window not two yards ahead of them.

"Come out," said Spike, after a cautious poking up of his head. "It's all right; they got their hands in the air. Let's get to 'em before the rest of the gang sees 'em."

Out the two leaped then, and threatened the little knot of Germans with their revolvers. These halted and faced the two Americans. They were dirty and ragged; some of them had on what appeared to be cotton overalls in place of trousers and they were all old men. One of them, gaunt and bearded, stepped forward as Spike approached and respectfully handed him a printed sheet of paper, like a beggar tendering an appeal for alms.

"Keep your gun on 'em, sargint," said Spike, "and watch for egg grenades in those mitts. This guy is givin' me his secret orders."

"Naw, they've all got them," said the sergeant major. "See?"

It was true. All the other prisoners grinned bashfully and displayed a piece of paper in their up-raised hands. They watched with curiosity while Spike examined the one the prisoner had given him. The tank rattled nearer from the far end of the street.

"It's in German," said Spike, turning over the paper in his hands. "It's a general order, but I can't read a word of it."

"Let's see it," said the sergeant major, forgetting the prisoners in his eagerness to see what the mysterious paper was. He looked over Spike's shoulder. "A. O. H.," he read aloud. "I know what that means. It means the Ancient Order of Hibernians."

"What's the rest of it about?" asked Spike.

"I don't know," said the sergeant major. "Maybe its an attack order and we'll get the D. S. C. for capturing it."

The order was printed in German script.

"A. O. H.", it began. "*Amerikanisches Operationsheer. Betrifft: Behandlung der Kriegsgefangenen.*"

"Maybe so," said Spike. "It don't mean a thing to me."

He turned it over perplexedly and opened the first sheet.

"Well, I'm ——!" said the two Yanks in chorus.

Across the bottom of the second page was very clearly printed in English characters, "John J. Pershing."

THE waiting prisoners grinned and shuffled their feet. The tank stopped and the little doors in the front of it clanged open. Spike looked up. The French officer was approaching, settling his collar and trying to brush some of the mud from his uniform.

"What the —— is all this about?" cried Spike. "We took this order off one of these Jerries, and it's signed by Black Jack. What's it about? Can you read it?"

The French officer took the paper, but walked over to the man who had descended from the tank, before reading it. Spike and the sergeant major began to perform a slight ceremony, a ceremony that welcomed most German prisoners into the American lines, or for that matter, welcomed any prisoners into any lines. The French officer, who had been making himself acquainted with the man from the tank, returned.

"This is an order from General Pershing," he said, holding up the piece of paper, "regarding the handling of prisoners of war. It's printed in German and dropped over the German lines by aviators. It begins by saying that the merciful treatment of prisoners of war is a custom of all civilized nations."

"That's right," said Spike.

Here the officer consulted the order again.

"It goes on to say that in a treaty between the king of Prussia and the United States in 1784 it was stipulated that prisoners taken by either from the other should be treated with all kindness, should be housed in clean barracks and should eat the same rations as the soldiers of the army that captured them."

"Good enough," said Spike, working busily over the prisoners.

"The order says that horses and military property shall be taken, but the prisoners shall be secure in all other possessions."

"You tell 'em," said Spike. "I stutter."

He transferred a ring from a German's finger to his own, and the sergeant major chuckled gloatingly as he slipped a watch from a gray pants pocket into one of olive drab.

"A footnote to the order says that any German coming into the American lines as a prisoner may be assured of the same treatment as that rendered the prodigal son. There you are," said the officer, smiling. "Keep it as a souvenir."

"What's all this stuff on the back about?" asked Spike.

"*Tagliche Portionen der Amerikanischen Soldaten*," read the officer. "It's the daily ration of the American soldier."

Spike regarded it with interest. He could distinguish the words "*Syrup*," "*Butter*," "*Milch*," from among some twenty other commodities.

"The thunderin' liar that wrote this!" he cried. "No wonder those Jerries surrendered so easily. I'd surrender myself if I thought I could get a feed like that."

"It doesn't say anything in that order about breaking rocks, does it?" grinned the sergeant major.

"Did yuh ever see a recruitin' poster that said anything about cooks' police?" asked Spike.

A doughboy with a bayoneted rifle appeared—there were quite a lot of them in the street now—and announced that he would take charge of the prisoners.

"Take 'em along," said the sergeant major. "We don't want 'em." The prisoners started to move off.

"Why, that bird's an officer!" cried Spike. "Look at his shoulder straps."

He pointed. Sure enough, the last prisoner of all had thin silver straps on his shoulders. Him the sergeant major pursued, and a sound was heard, as of a hobnailed shoe in violent contact with a convenient portion of the human body.

"Hey!" protested Spike as the sergeant major returned. "They didn't do that to the prodigal son."

"Well, they ought to have," said the sergeant major.

The French officer returned from somewhere at this moment and addressed himself to Spike. "How would you like to pull those bodies out of the street?" he asked. "I'm going down the street a ways; I'm suspicious of what is down that left-hand turn."

Spike and the sergeant major proceeded to drag the body of C company's lieutenant, the doctor, and the gas officer into a house, where they covered them with one of the German blankets that were lying around.

"Where do you suppose the colonel is?" asked Spike.

"Search me," said the sergeant major. "Say, it sounds as if they'd run into a scrap up there, doesn't it?"

Spike listened. He had heard machine

guns at work for some time, ever since the tank had gone up the right-hand road. The French officer had probably directed the tank that way, for he had told Spike, when they were in the garret, that there were guns in that direction. It had been one of these guns that had killed the signal corps sergeant in the orchard.

The firing seemed to be louder, though, now, and Spike went to the door to hear better. Doughboys were still entering the town, not in masses, but singly and in scattered groups. These last were machine rifle and one-pounder crews. All of them looked very solemn, very white from lack of sleep, and quite muddy. Spike wondered if they were the same organization that had pulled out the day before, reorganized now, and returned to wipe the blot from their shield.

They walked along, those men, each intent upon his own thoughts, looking very like a crowd coming home from a baseball game, but they didn't go down to the end of the street any more; they turned and went off between the houses and so out into the orchard, up to where the smoke was beginning to rise above the trees.

A knot of them stopped opposite Spike's window and one explored the cellar of a very large house there. When he returned his report seemed to be satisfactory, for another man produced a board from under his arm, on which was painted a rude red cross. This he nailed to the side of the cellar door, pounding the nail home with a rock. Then the group of men dived precipitately from sight.

Before Spike had turned away from the window to call to the sergeant major, the dressing station had begun to receive customers. A doughboy had arrived with another on a stretcher, borne by two Germans. Within the next minute three more stretchers arrived. A half-naked man appeared, his blouse and shirt hanging in shreds about his waist, a glaringly new bandage across his chest and about one shoulder. This one sat down with his back against the house and smoked a cigaret, pulling his rags about him to shelter him from the cold.

Spike was forcibly reminded that he was cold himself, that he was very wet, that he had had no food nor any sleep. It occurred to him that he would have to account for his time when he returned to the battery.

"I reported to the regimental P. C. of the only infantry I could find," he said to himself, "If there's any crab about it, that frog officer will help me out."

"Here's the colonel," cried the sergeant major suddenly, and he and Spike dashed into the street.

The colonel was walking toward the house, talking to two other officers, one evidently a chief of brigade, for he had a very hard-boiled countenance, and several other officers, who might be his staff, were grouped in the background.

"Here are the two men now," cried the colonel. "Do you know what happened to the doctor and the other two officers?"

"Their bodies are in the house there, sir," said the sergeant major.

The colonel looked very weary and sad, and a tear wandered down his cheek that he made no attempt to brush away. He did not ask for an explanation of how the officers had come to their death. The hard-boiled man said naught, but looked very stonily at the sergeant major and Spike, much as a dead fish regards the passersby from a fish-store window, and with just as much interest.

"Here, you two men," said the colonel, turning to Spike and the sergeant major, "you've had a hard night. Go off somewhere and go to sleep. We won't need you for a while. By the way, you're an artilleryman, aren't you? Well, when you wake up, you might as well go back to your organization. It's pretty certain that the man you were sent to report to isn't around here anywhere. And I'm very grateful for the help you've given."

He and the general moved on.

The Greek lingered in the tail of the procession and him the sergeant major summoned.

"How did the doctor and the other officers get killed," asked the sergeant major. "Do you know?"

"I don't know," said the Greek. "I was weeth da colonel."

"Where were you?"

"Him an' me, we was a down behin' da house, we was a-gon' rosh da machine gun. Da colonel was a-gon' fire hees gun, and da odders gon rosh from da fron' an' we wasa gon rosh from da rear. When we come back da house, one Boche is in da door, and he shoot a rifle at us. We hear da machine gun go, out in da street, so we runa back to see what happen, an' see Americans. Den da colonel talk to some officer, an' when we go look for doctor we can' fin' him. Den da general come up in a side-car an' the colonel have to talk to him some more."

"I suppose they heard the rifle an' come surgin' out, thinkin' it was the Old Man givin' the signal," said Spike. "It was a fool move, because even if the Old Man had fired the shot, the gun in the church would have got them just the same."

"That frog officer took us with him to see if he could spot any more guns, and they couldn't wait till he got back," decided the sergeant major.

"I guess you're right," agreed Spike. "He sounded off something like that up on the roof when the gun first began firing. We revenged 'em, anyway, didn't we?"

"I'll say," agreed the sergeant major.

"I'm for a little sleep," said Spike after a while. "How about you?"

"Let's go."

They set off to find a good place.

"Do you know much about this town?" asked Spike.

"Not a bit. We hadn't hardly got in before we were kicked out again."

"Well, let's hunt for the old German P. C. That ought to be a good place, if it hasn't been grabbed off."

They went past the dressing station, where there was now a double row of stretchers, to a cellar entrance marked, "Abrestungs Kommando." They peered in. It was a dirty place, half full of torn blankets. There was a pile of rusty rifles against the wall and another pile of helmets nearby.

"Looks like a salvage pile," said Spike. "I wouldn't go in there; it smells too bad."

"Let's go into the house where we took the machine-gun crew. There's a lot of blankets in there."

"Good," agreed Spike, and in they went and threw themselves down on the blankets the Germans had left.

"I just happened to think," said the sergeant major sleepily, "that all those Jerries we captured are across the street in the cellar."

"I hope their friends leave us alone long enough for me to do a bit of bunk police," said Spike. "I got two hours' sleep the night before last and none last night, and I bet I don't get any today. Here goes anyway."

He closed his eyes and immediately slept.

V

SPIKE began to dream after a while. He dreamed he was back in Boston and that he waited for an elevated train. One was on its way; he could hear it roaring and thundering in the distance. After a time it arrived at the station, but it must have been an express, for it did not stop. The first car rushed by, the second, the third, Spike counted them: four, five, six, thundering and rattling by, blowing up clouds of dust and making the newspapers whirl. There seemed no end to that train; car after car roared past, and then very, very slowly Spike began to return to consciousness. He could still hear the train roaring. Gradually he awakened.

Where was he? Oh, yes, he was in France and at the front, worse luck! The town, the night's happenings, memory, all returned to him by degrees. The train still thundered. What was that racket? A barrage!

"Heh!" yelled Spike, and was awake at once. The sergeant major was sitting up with half-opened mouth.

"Wascominoff?" he inquired.

"—— to pay," said Spike, "an' comin' our way. Git up!"

He ran to the back of the house where he could see across the fields. Nothing in sight. There was a barrage falling on the road beyond the orchard, and "overs" were coming into the town. Spike knew that the barrage was fired by German guns. In the first place there was no reason why the Americans should shell a road that had been cleared of enemies an hour ago, and in the second place, Spike's intuition told him that there were no Americans in sight. If they were following up their own barrage, the place would have been brown with doughboys. The sergeant major came back to have a look, too.

"There's some of our men," he said, pointing to the orchard. Spike looked. Some men in olive drab had run back from the road and were setting up a machine gun. They got it into action and fired away manfully. Spike could not hear the gun; the sound of the shell fire was too loud. He saw a little knot of rifle men running, then come into the orchard and take shelter behind trees.

Shells followed them. The noise was

louder. Spike could see a high wall of smoke, that moved majestically forward, rolling like the car of Juggernaut, and these men in the orchard were devotees, who were going to cast themselves to death under its wheels.

"What's up?" asked the sergeant major, with a scared face.

"There's a creepin' barrage goin' out there," answered Spike. "Jerries pullin' a counter attack. Maybe these are our Hindenburg friends the prisoner was tellin' about."

The two ran to the front of the house and into the street. Men were running about there like ants. At the lower end near the church, they were rushing out of the houses, bearing boards, old furniture, shutters, doors, anything to make a barricade with. Others were piling up stones and bricks from the shattered dwellings for the same purpose.

Orderlies were running in and out of the dressing station, carrying the double row of stretchers into cellars on both sides of the street, anywhere to get the wounded to a place of safety. Shells burst in the street and men dived to cover at the shriek of them, like frogs taking to water at the approach of a dog.

When the dust of the explosion had settled, heads came up cautiously, to see if any one had been hit and if so, if he had on him any little article of wearing apparel that they, the unwounded ones, could use. *Tack-tack-tack* went the machine guns; *berram-berram-berram-BLAM!* went the shells, and houses collapsed with a rumble of falling stones and a crash and snap of timbers.

"What now?" asked the sergeant major.

"Ever been in a scrap like this before?" asked Spike.

"Never. This is my first time up. We're a new division. Have you?"

"Lots," said Spike, trying to appear nonchalant. "Let's go help with that barricade."

"Where'd all this gang come from so quick?" panted the sergeant major.

"Our guys must be fallin' back," answered Spike. "These men are comin' in from the front."

They dashed down the street and began to help pile the doors and beams up so that there would be some protection for a body of men against an advancing enemy. The barricade was being raised directly across the end of the street, in front of the church. Two machine guns were at the corner of the right-hand road, one against the front wall of the church, and the other by the corner house. They fired steadily down the road. In the window of the corner house a man sat carelessly on the sill, one foot propped against the window casing. He chewed tobacco, spitting into the street, and from time to time he raised his rifle and fired. Spike wondered what he could see to shoot at.

A worried-looking officer was directing the building of the barricade.

"Is there any place around here I can see what's happening?" he cried.

"I can show you," said Spike, and led the way into the house on the corner, and so up to the garret where he and the other two had first seen the machine gun in the church.

They couldn't see very much. Here and there they could distinguish a man lying down and firing; they could see one or two machine guns, but not a single German. A tank waddled across the field beyond the orchard and disappeared in the woods on the other side.

Then men in khaki began to pour out of the farther woods, coming from the American lines, and going slowly toward the wall of smoke that marked the German advance. They lay down in the field and were hidden by the grass.

"We're going to be in for a hot time," said the officer. "We've got them in flank from the cross-road and from the town here, and the Boche can't get across that field until they take the town. That must be the reserve battalion that's just been thrown in."

"What happened anyway?" asked Spike.

"—— knows," said the officer. "I guess we got a little disorganized going through the town over there. The first I knew, I noticed we weren't advancing very fast. In fact, we weren't advancing at all. I was having a lot more casualties than I should. Then they rushed us, and before we got our breath again, we'd lost about a hundred yards. They started to shell us, and after that there was nothing to do but get out. I expected we'd find supports in the town, but I don't see any."

They went across the roof, to the corner from whence Spike and the French officer had seen the gun-crew in the church. They could see chimneys, and red-tiled roofs, and a great deal of smoke, and hear the continuous drumming of the barrage, but that was all. They went back to the other side again.

"I wish I knew what was going on in that smoke," said the officer. "There's none coming down that left-hand fork, so it's my guess that the outfits farther up in the town are holding. It's harder to run men out of a town than it is out of woods. They'll probably drive down to that right fork and then make a flank attack on the town."

In the field beyond the orchard suddenly appeared a great number of brown bugs, scuttling along, going in the direction of the American lines. Spike thought of the times when he was a kid and had turned over a stone, or an old log, and had seen the ants underneath hurry for safety. These brown bugs ran here and there; they leaped into holes and then leaped out again, and numbers of them lay down and stayed in that position. Shells burst among them continuously. After a time there were no more, then a new lot appeared, only they were darker colored, and there were just a few of them.

"Let's hurry down," said the lieutenant. "Those are Boche scouts; their main gang will be in on us pretty soon now."

"Where's the rest of your battalion?" asked Spike, as they hurried down the stairs.

"Battalion? Yes, where is it? There are men out there building that barricade from every regiment in the brigade. This is what you get," continued the officer, cursing bitterly, "by having a lot of —— idiotic sheep in positions of authority. This is what you get for running men around all night long, from pillar to post, with contradictory orders. Now, thanks to a staff composed of gilded half-wits, and an artillery that doesn't know a barrage from a rolling kitchen, this division of mine is likely to get itself badly burned. Do you know that since this thing started, this withdrawal or retreat, or running away, or whatever you want to call it, I haven't seen a single officer? Not one, major, colonel, or any one else. Away they went, —— for breakfast, and the line officers can hold the bag."

"Yes, sir," said Spike, realizing that he should say something and not knowing what.

They reached the street and the officer left and began to pile stones on the barricade.

Spike found the sergeant major and they crouched under the barricade.

THAT officer was a good man. He sent a machine gun into the upper stories of one of the houses and had riflemen line the windows on both sides of the street. He put beams across the barricade, so that their ends pointed toward the enemy, and blocked the ends with stones. He had men tear down a section of iron fence, with spikes on it, and lay that on the barricade in just the right position to draw blood from any Hunnish nose that ran against it. He made every preparation to receive his visitors most cordially, but he was badly handicapped. He had only about forty men, three machine guns, no auto or "shosho" rifles, and very little ammunition.

"Get a rifle," he said to Spike and the sergeant major, "and knock over a few of those birds that keep crossing the road up there."

The two rose obediently and went even as far as the dressing station, where they found a rifle, but no ammunition.

"Who gets this?" asked the sergeant major.

"You keep it," answered Spike. "I don't savvy it. I'll go back and help with one of those machine guns."

So back they went.

The roar of battle was nearer now, and the shells stopped falling in the town. The woods were being shelled to a fare-you-well and the field where the support battalion had lain was being rolled flat. Machine-gun and rifle fire still continued, very loudly, and there was faint shouting. From the corner of the street the Germans could be seen crossing the right-hand road and the sergeant major, with his rifle, and Spike on the machine gun to which he had attached himself, fired into the thick of them. The man still sat in the window of the corner house, spitting brownly and shooting. He was a sniper and was picking off enemy officers whenever he spotted one.

The number of Americans in the town began to increase. They were coming in from the fields, creeping over the barricade, coming in through the houses. As soon as they appeared, the officer assigned them to some position and they trotted obediently away.

"Ya-a-a-a-ay! Here they come!" cried the sniper.

There was a thunder of feet.

Spike's heart went to his mouth, for around the corner of the church came a crowd of Germans, a thick mob of them, their front bristling with bayonets, and a kind of halo of stick bombs floating about their heads.

"Hey!" yelled Spike.

"Hey! Hey! Hey!" cried everybody.

Spike's machine gun jammed, and the gunner pounded the breach with his fist. It purred away again, firing into the Germans at pointblank range.

"Ride 'em," howled Spike. "Sit on 'em!"

The other gun across the road rattled steadily, its crew stony faced and calm. A bomb burst near it, and two of its men went down. The rest carried on, nor paused to care for the wounded. The houses and the barricade crackled with rifle fire; men howled and shrieked. Bombs burst with a tremendous crash.

It could not last long. No human being could stand that terrific fire at pointblank range, and the remnants of the German troops took to their heels, leaving their dead thickly in the road. The Yanks behind the barricade gave a ringing cheer.

"This is the best battle I was ever in," declared Spike, "and if I ever get out of it, I won't crave to see another as long as I live."

The Germans had counter-attacked some time before, not with any hope of regaining lost ground, but to give themselves a little time. The flanks of two divisions overlapped here and the roads in the rear were crowded in terrible fashion. A little breathing space, then, could be used to great advantage.

As frequently happens in an advance, the American troops had got slightly out of hand. "Their officers couldn't restrain their men," as newspaper correspondents love to say. Consequently when the resistance stiffened, there was confusion, just as there is when the leading car in a line of traffic stops. When the leading car starts to back there is more, and when the leading units of the advance fell back before a well-timed rush, —— was to pay.

The counter-attack became a tremendous success. Word of it went back to the army commander by telephone and airplane and the order was given to follow up the success with the utmost energy. Meanwhile the division on the right, the Thirty-seventh, was directed to attack with the utmost vigor. This it did, and the American units in front of it, with their flank unprotected as it was, began to fall back. They went very slowly, however, firing from doorways and windows, hoping all the time for reinforcements, knowing that they were being fired on from the flank, but not realizing how far that counter-attack in the woods had progressed. The Germans in the woods made no attempt to penetrate the upper end of the town, from the flank. They simply fired at the houses. When they had cleared the woods of Americans, they would then make a flank attack on the outlying houses at the southern end where the barricade was, and with that end in their hands, all the Americans in the upper portion would be cut off from their own lines, would be between two forces, and must perforce surrender.

The Germans exerted every effort, for it is rifts in the dike like this that bring on disaster. If it were worked properly, the entire American advance might be stopped. The Americans, meanwhile, not having provided for a very good system of liaison from front to rear—Spike's tour of duty was an example of how good the liaison was—did not learn of the break for some time. The appearance at the artillery positions of certain of the infantry who believed in fighting another day, was the first warning. Thereupon the Americans got busy, very efficiently, once they got started.

'Here, you," called the lieutenant over the barricade to Spike. "Come in here."

There was a tiny space at the corner of the barricade, so that people could run in and out and the machine gun crews have a way of retreat, and through this Spike ducked.

"Are you the artilleryman?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes, sir," said Spike.

"Can you find your way back to the guns?"

"Easy," said Spike; also a bit eagerly.

"Very well, you stick right around now. If we don't get some action out of our guns, I'll want you to go back and ask for it. Have you got a Very pistol?"

"No, sir," said Spike.

"I've got a barrage rocket," cried one who overheard. "I can shoot it from my rifle."

"Better lay off it," said Spike—how well he knew. "If you get an answer, the chances are you'll get a barrage right on the back of your neck."

"Shoot it!" said the officer.

Away went the rocket and burst, seven green stars and a red one. They waited. After about two minutes that seemed fifty, Spike announced that it hadn't been seen.

"The guns are way back," he said. "If there's any artillery supporting this bunch, they're shootin' out in the field there, and anyway they probably couldn't see the rocket in all this smoke and fog."

More men came in, wild-eyed, and announced that the front line had given way entirely. Spike asked the sergeant major how he did.

"Pretty rotten," was the answer. "I can't seem to hit a thing. I think I've been holding too high. I've been using battle-sight, but I think I'll use the peep. The worst of it is that I've only got five rounds left. I found a bandolier in the street, but it only had fifteen rounds in it. I got ten more from one of the men here, but it's all gone. You'd be surprized how fast the ammunition goes."

A shell whistled, then swooped rushingly at them. BLAM! It burst just outside the barricade. Spike shook himself and looked at the sergeant major. He was unhurt. When the smoke had blown away, Spike peered over the barricade. That shell had lighted right at the corner and entirely eradicated both machine guns and their crews.

The officer sat down on the stones and wept. Spike felt very sick. The officer knew, and Spike knew, that that shell had come from an American gun. When they whistled that way, they came from behind and not from before. It might have been an answer to the rocket, it might have been a wild shot from some battery that was putting up a counter-barrage, but it was an American shell anyway.

"I quit," cried the officer. "I'm done. I can lick the German army, but I can't lick the German army and the American army, too. I quit."

Then just to show he meant it, he grabbed his pistol and dashed to the barricade to try to stem the flood of howling Huns that was pouring over it. Spike sat right where he was, his back against the stones of the barricade. He was a little over ten feet from a doorway and every time a gray uniform appeared in that doorway, Spike fired his revolver.

It was like shooting at the side of a barn. After a while they stopped coming, the doorway was blocked so. The men in the upper stories had a wild time. They fired down and picked their targets with care. The lone machine gun in the second floor across the street chuckled with glee.

A second time the enemy fell back, what was left of him, and a second time the Yanks cheered. When they began to count their remaining ammunition, they were not so cheerful. Spike had very foolishly jumped on the barricade and emptied a newly reloaded cylinder after the retiring Germans. When he tried to reload again, he discovered that his ammunition carrier was empty. A search of his pockets disclosed no more bullets.

It was then that the first Americans began to appear down the left fork. They were badly disorganized now, for the Germans had effected a lodgement in some of the houses behind the church and were shooting up the Americans from the rear. They began to break, the roar of machine-gun and rifle fire swelled louder, the explosion of grenades was so incessant as to sound like a barrage, and the real barrage rumbled steadily on the road and in the woods behind the town, cutting off any possible reinforcements.

The Germans advanced like the waves of a rising tide, rushing up on the shore and then receding, but with each rush going a little farther and leaving a line of chips and weed a little higher. The chips and weed in this case were the Americans, forced back, washed along, but fighting every inch of the way and forcing the Germans to fall back and reorganize after each rush.

AT LAST the waves of the attack lapped at the barricade, and the Americans overflowed it and poured down the far side. Here was a swelling of the barricade's garrison! Spike thought there must be a thousand men there, but there could not have been more than a hundred at the most, and many more were still outside the barricade. Spike recognized the colonel—and the French liaison officer, among the first to come over the barricade.

Yanks poured into the town from all directions. They seemed to spring from the ground. Machine guns barked from the upper stories of the houses; men clambered out on the tiles and hurled grenades upon the attackers.

On their side, the Germans carried light machine guns to the garrets and fired down into the streets behind the barricade. The men behind the barricade, officers and privates, stood off attack after attack with grenade and rifle and pistol. Their ammunition was giving out, and they used stones to hurl and bits of broken doors for clubs. Spike, hunting for pistol ammunition, had found a French rifle with a very long bayonet on it, and he and two more guarded a door that opened just behind the barricade. This door opened from the cellar of the corner house on the left hand corner, and the Boche kept trying to get in through this cellar.

One of the Yanks had grenades that he threw down into the cellar whenever he thought necessary; the third had a "shosho" gun, with which he fired when any Boche appeared at the door. Spike stood at their backs and whenever a German appeared over the barricade, at that corner, Spike thrust at him with the bayonet. Sometimes he drew blood and sometimes not.

He kept a wary eye out for grenades. The Boche, however, threw them with too much force, so that they burst down the street, too far in the rear of the barricade to do any harm.

It will be remembered that the division that advanced through the town and that was now in front of the barricade were storm troops, troops accustomed to be the spearhead of an assault. This division was the same that had attacked on the Marne in July, east of Dormans, and had penetrated to quite a depth.

The Germans in the field beyond the orchard were Landwehr, not assault troops, and they lay on their stomachs and fired machine guns, but made no attempt to rush the town—yet. They waited to see how the 37th would make out. Word came to them finally to take some of the lead out of their shoes and make a flank attack on the houses of the town. Meanwhile, two regiments of the 37th, the 150th and the 147th, veterans of Tannenburg and the Masurian Lakes, would see what they could do to reduce the barricade.

"Yow!" roared the Americans. "Here they come! Heh! Heh! Stay with 'em, gang!"

A party of Germans mounted the platform behind the rose window of the church and tossed grenades at the barricade, but some men on the roof fired at them, and they withdrew, leaving their dead. Spike stood up, in that fearful confusion of shouts and crashing and pounding of feet and thrust madly at the gray wall on top of the barricade. The roar of machine-gun and rifle fire was deafening.

Spike continued to poke with his bayonet; it broke and he swung his rifle by the barrel. That broke and then he threw stones from the barricade, bits of crockery, an old chair, a doorknob, a pitcher, a bronze kettle. This last took a German square in the chest and he went down as though dragged from behind. They laid hold of Spike once, by the gas mask, but the strap broke and he was able to scramble clear. Some one at his side bayoneted his would-be captors.

Aid for the defenders arrived from an unexpected quarter. An aviator flew low and dropped bombs into the thick of the rush; then he banked round and fired his machine gun valiantly. An air attack is bad on the nerves. The Germans could storm the barricade in the face of half a dozen machine guns, but one flying around over their heads was too much. The wave rolled back, and the attackers took shelter behind the farther houses while they got back their wind.

The airman circled about overhead and fired a light, so that the men in the town would spread a panel and let him know what organization was below him. Two black planes flew at him, swiftly and directly, as wasps fly to the attack. The three circled and spun, and the two Germans drove the American off over the field, where they shot him down in a flaming ruin. Bad actors, those Boche, and they wanted that town badly. The German planes disappeared behind the woods.

Spike exhaled his breath sharply—he had held it all through the airfight—and looked at his neighbor to see what he thought of it. Judge then of Spike's surprize to find the colonel, his companion of the early morning, standing beside him, leaning on a very bloody bayonet. The colonel recognized Spike immediately.

"Hello, artillery, how goes it?" cried he. "Say, boy, you skip out of here, back to that house where we took that gun, and see if there aren't some more grenades in there. If there are, bring them up here; if there aren't, keep on going, get back to your guns and tell them to shell this place till —— wouldn't have it! Never mind us, you tell 'em to fire! If these Jerries get through, they're liable to turn the Argonne into a second Marne, with us on the losers' end this time. Now beat it!"

"But you'll be killed," objected Spike.

The colonel smiled, not mirthfully.

"I intend to stay here with the rest of the regimental staff," he said. "Now beat it. I told you to go once before."

Spike went down the street. The men behind the barricade were dragging the wounded out of the line of fire. Spike saw the body of the lieutenant with whom he had gone up to the roof. He saw the French officer, two pistols stuck through his belt, tie a cloth around his bare head to keep the blood out of his eyes. Spike began to run. He could hear firing from the other side of the houses and it occurred to him that he was weaponless and that he might encounter some rough, rude Jerries in the house where he was going. He picked up a table leg broken from its parent table. It took both hands to swing, but it was a real Goliath-size war-club. Then Spike proceeded.

The Germans in the field were on the move at last. This time, with the aid and assistance of a company from the 147th, they were going to make an attack on the town in conjunction with another try at the barricade. Spike heard the scrap start at the barricade again and increased his pace. Some of the attacking force from the orchard got to the back of the house as Spike got to the front. Now there were not enough Americans to garrison all the houses, but the Germans did not know this, or they would have rushed the place sooner. For this reason they were cautious about going into those houses.

"Hey," called Spike, as he entered the door. "Who's there?" He had heard footsteps, he was very sure. He went into the room where he had slept, and there met two very rough-looking Germans, full pack, boots, rifles, bayonets and all. There was just about room for Spike to swing his table leg in a good wide sweep. Sock! It struck one of the helmets squarely on the side and the German casualty list for the day increased by one. The German's companion made exit by the rear door at the same time that Spike made exit by the front door. Neither had taken a second look after the club had done its bit.

"Man!" thought Spike inanely. "If his dome had been a baseball, that'd been a home run!"

In the street Spike stopped. The rush had been a success this time. The barricade was covered with a crowd of twisting, swaying men; men in olive drab were pouring from some doorways, and men in gray from others. A Yank machine-gun crew were setting up in the middle of the street, not twenty feet from the fighting on the barricade. Germans were tossing bombs up into windows, and Yanks were tossing them back again. Every house was a fort, every door a battle-ground.

While Spike watched, the fight on the barricade was over; the gray mob poured over it, ran around the end and tore it away. The Germans began to bomb the cellars and dive into doorways, to dig out the Americans in the upper stories. Maybe it was time to go, thought Spike.

He rushed through the house again, and just outside the rear door came upon a cluster of gray backs, with funny little coat tails and brass buttons on them. A gun-crew was preparing a position under the trees of the orchard. A bomb exploded in the cellar next door. Yes, it was time to be going. He met a man in the hall and had no room to swing his club. He met the German with it pointed bayonet-wise and drove it into the other's belly. Two down. Spike hurdled the body and was out the door.

The Germans had advanced very far down the street this time. They were methodically bombing the cellars, and machine guns had been set up and the upper floors of the houses were being raked. Men raged in those houses. Helmets fell to the street and some of their owners followed them. At the dressing station, an orderly with his brassard in plain view had taken down the board with the red cross on it and was holding it over his head, so that all might see.

It had always been the custom for the medical personnel to remain with the wounded, regardless of whether it meant their capture by the enemy or not. A Red Cross brassard is supposed to be respected, but all men, regardless of nationality, are liable to lose their heads, especially when they have just found themselves victors of a hard-fought encounter. The orderly held something beside that board in his hands; he held his life; but he was taking no chances on having a potato-masher bomb tossed down among the stretchers in that crowded cellar.

A German in a house a few doors away shot at Spike with his rifle. In another house there was a real bayonet fight in progress, and several Huns came out of there faster than they went in. They were reinforced and went in again. A shell lighted in the street and killed Germans and Americans both, and neither side paid it any heed.

Two men came toward Spike, their rifles held loosely in their hands. Seeing him standing there, gazing about in bewilderment, and weaponless, they thought he had surrendered, and they had designs on his watch. They learned their mistake. Spike swung his club—oh, a mighty swing—so that it caved in one man's head and knocked the rifle he had tried to parry the blow with clear across the street. The other man fled, and Spike hurled his club at him.

"Good shot!" cried Spike, even before the club had reached its mark. It smote that particular Boche right in the neck, just where the helmet does not cover, and the click of it was very loud.

A grenade fell at Spike's feet, and he had just presence of mind enough to toss it back before it burst. It went off in air, and Spike went head over heels. He thought he had been hit, but he could still move all his members. As he turned over and jumped to his feet again, there was a tiny spat beside him and a little puff of dust. He turned once more toward his enemies.

There was a man in a window with a grenade poised to hurl; another man in the street was shooting at him with a pistol. Huns were looking at him everywhere, and down the street a machine gunner was waving his arm for the people in the street to get out of the way, presumably so that he could try his luck at Spike.

Spike noticed that there was not an American in sight—but there was. At the far end of the street were six of them, coming out of a house in a single file, and each with his hands in the air. Yes, indeed, it was time to be going. Spike went.

VI

IT WILL be remembered that the road curved sharply just at the edge of the town. In two bounds Spike was around the turn and after that was fairly safe. The end of the town was the high-water mark of the German advance, and Spike was not pursued. Nevertheless he did not slacken speed. When a shell burst in the road he took to the woods, and when one burst in the woods he returned to the road again.

After a time he slowed to a walk, not from any feeling of safety, but because he was out of breath. He was horribly afraid now, and his fear increased the farther he went from the town. In a situation of deadly peril, the human mind is so crowded with sensations that there seems to be no room for fear. It is only after the peril is past, or less immediate, that fear becomes dominant.

Spike could hear shells swishing by overhead, on their way to the town, probably, where they would do little harm except to knock a few more holes in the houses.

The Germans had planted a few machine guns and hauled their forces out again, just as they had done on the afternoon of the day previous, with this exception—that the day before the guns in the town had been left simply to delay the next day's advance, but now they were there to hold the town. There were a lot more of them. No stranded regimental staff could have cleaned them out, nor even a regiment itself. It was a long time before that town changed hands again.

Spike sat down in the ditch and considered. He was in a bad way. He had been away from his battery a long time, how long he could not tell, for he had broken his wrist watch. The sky was still gray and threatening, so that he could not judge the time by the sun. It might be about noon, maybe later.

Where was the colonel? What was his name even? Probably he was dead. The sergeant major undoubtedly was. The French officer, what had become of him? That was probably his final appearance, too. How then, would Spike account for his whereabouts during the last night? There would be explanations to make and unless he had something to support his story, it would not be believed.

It was a very simple matter for a liaison man or a runner, or even an observer, to duck into a convenient hole and stay there as long as he wanted to, instead of going up to the firing-line and doing his duty. When his twenty-four hours were up, all he had to do was to return to his battery and tell a wild tale of his being lost. He always had to tell his story twice, once to his immediate commander, and once to Judge Duffy, and neither one believed it.

Spike knew what happened to those birds. They sent them up to the very frontest front line and had them fill sand bags, while Fritz calibrated his guns on them. Spike had no desire to fill sandbags at the front line. He had had all the front line he wanted for the rest of his life.

"Oh," moaned Spike, his head in his hands, "I sure got a jinx on me, and I know how it got there, too."

He extracted some small comfort from the thought that he would soon be back with the battery, where he could read Simmons a very vigorous lecture on the folly of trying to economize on matches by taking three lights from one.

"Tonight, anyway," Spike muttered, "I can sleep warm and dry in that good old dugout. When I get back to the battery everything will be all right."

Thus cheered, he went on down the road and continued without adventure, until he found himself among resting infantry. These barred the road and looked at him sourly.

"What's eatin' you guys?" demanded Spike. "I'm an American; where d'yuh get this fixed bayonet stuff?"

"Gwan!" said those who barred the way. "Git back where yuh belong! Back t' your outfit, yuh yeller unmentionable."

Spike regarded them. They were armed and he was not; at least his gun was empty. He was alone, and they were several hundred, all scowling at him with very evident dislike. Spike stood on one foot and then the other. Conciliation would be the best thing.

"You got me wrong," said he. "I ain't beating it. I'm a liaison agent. I'm on my way to the artillery."

The men with the bayonets seemed unconvinced.

"Let's take him back to the Old Man," said one, and so they led Spike back to where their captain was.

The captain was, at that moment, in conference with his battalion commander and several more officers, who sat around and offered their advice without being asked for it.

"This guy," announced one of Spike's guardians, "was wanderin' down the road, and we brings him in, like the captain said we should."

The officers looked at Spike with interest.

"How come?" asked the major of Spike, with ominous quiet in his tone.

Spike told him all, beginning with the night before and ending with his reception by the present company. The major seemed pained to learn of the town's loss and he directed an officer to telephone Spike's report to the division.

"Oh, Cogswell," he called, after some thought, and one of the officers answered. "Here's an artilleryman for you," said the major and went back to his maps again.

The man named Cogswell appeared. He said—

"What outfit are you from?"

Spike told him.

"Weren't you sent up to me last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been, then? Off hiding out somewhere? Couldn't find the P. C. I suppose?"

"No, sir, I had no instructions where it was. I was just told to go up the road until I found it."

"Huh! Very strange. We've been bivouacked in these woods since yesterday morning."

This officer had not heard Spike's account of the capture of the town and Spike was forced to repeat it. The most skeptical man on earth could see that Spike was telling the truth.

"Huh! Well, stick right around, now that you've found us at last and don't get separated any more."

"Where's this outfit goin'?" faltered Spike.

"When it gets dark enough, we're going to take a crack at getting that town up there back again."

For the rest of the afternoon, Spike sat in the ditch, his back against the muddy bank, and his feet before him. What cared he if he was wet and cold and sleepless and hungry? He would soon be dead. It was impossible for him to think about going back to that town, back up there where shells banged and machine guns rattled. The thought of it was horrible.

"Shower down, jinx," he exclaimed aloud. "If there's anywhere you can hit me now, go to it."

About twilight the infantry fed, eating the hard tack and canned beans from their haversacks. Spike was invited to partake and did so, very heartily. It was his first meal since he had left the battery the night before.

THERE was a stir among the resting troops. Men began to stand up and sling their packs; voices called; there was a rattle of equipment. The battalion began to depart, forming combat groups as they moved off, for contact with the enemy was expected at any minute. Spike and his officer still waited in the ditch, for they would go with battalion headquarters. There was another stir on the road, and a voice could be heard inquiring for Lieutenant Cogswell.

"Here!" cried the lieutenant.

A squad of men appeared in the gloom. Spike looked at them and his heart bounded. There were men with coils of wire about their shoulders and with telephone instruments in their hands. Spike refused, however, to allow himself to build any false hopes. One of these men, who bore no wire, had something in his belt that gleamed, and this Spike knew was a Very pistol, a weapon for the shooting of rockets. The leader of this shadowy group of men conferred with the lieutenant. The officer then turned to Spike.

"All right, artillery," he said, "you can go back to your outfit. Another regiment is backing us up. Maybe they'll do a better job; they can't do a worse one."

Spike waited not, but went immediately. He was now infinitely weary. His mind was numb, too numb even to resent the officer's last remark, and his body seemed to be in the same condition. He had no thought but to get back to the dugout on the hill and get under the blankets.

"I shouldn't be a —— bit surprized," he remarked, "if the outfit was gone, or the dugout blown to ——. It'd be about equal to my other luck."

The twilight turned into night and Fritz began his nightly working up of the roads. Guns grumbled in the distance, and shells clanged. Spike tried to keep on, but after a few of those G. I. cans had burst near enough to throw dirt on him, he gave up and lay in the ditch until the firing should stop. Not a soul, not even an ambulance, went along the road in either direction.

Off toward the German lines, about where the town would be, was a faint crackling of rifle and machine-gun fire. When the road had taken him across an open space, Spike had been able to see the gleaming of the flares against the low lying clouds.

Late in the night Spike tried his luck again. The clouds had gone and the stars shone, so that it was easier to see. The shells still shrieked, but not so thickly, and so, very weary and reeling in his walk, Spike came to his battery position again.

"They're still here, anyway," said Spike, as he climbed the hill and saw the black humps of the seventy-fives and the skyward pointing machine guns, for all the world like lone stalks of corn. He sought the Old Man's dugout and cautiously lifting the blanket at the door, crept in.

"Who's there?" cried the Old Man, rising up on his blankets.

"I've just come back from the front, it's Private Knowlton," answered Spike, and waited to hear the Old Man rage.

"Well, for ——'s sake!" cried the captain. "I'm sure glad to see you. We found out about half an hour after you'd gone that we'd sent you right into Germany. Boy, you've been on my mind the last twenty-four hours. Run along now, I can sleep comfortably now I know you're all right. Come round in the morning and tell me about it."

Spike backed out. He was safe enough on that score anyway. His thoughts yearned for the dugout, and he started off up the hill toward it, a little apprehensive lest he find it wrecked by a shell. No, it was there; his heart lightened as he saw the round hump of it against the stars. He bent down to enter. *Snf-snf-snf.* The place reeked of gas. There was no shelter half over the entrance, and as Spike peered in, he could see the sky through the other end of the elephant iron. His searching hand found no blankets on the dugout floor.

"Gas around huh? I'd better get outta here."

Spike withdrew and sniffed again. The

air was clear, except for the usual front line smell of millions of unwashed men, diluted gas and high-explosive reek.

"I bet that's mustard in there," thought Spike, "and if it is, these wet clothes'll let me in for a good burn. I wonder where the gang is."

It occurred to Spike that the gas guard, who had the double duty of watching for signs of gas and for barrage rockets from the front, would be able to tell him where Baldy and Guthrie had moved their quarters to, not that the gas guard kept tabs on where the men of the battery slept, but because he would be the only man awake. Spike found him wrapped in a shelter-half, standing by a post to which was affixed the gas signal, an old auto-horn.

"Yeh, I know where they are," answered this one, in response to Spike's inquiry. "They got evacuated this morning. A mustard shell lay down right at the door and burned —— out of 'em."

"That comes o' lightin' three candles on a match," remarked Spike, "and I'm out of a bed."

B battery's rocket guard appeared out of the night and asked for the makin's. He and the other guard sympathized with Spike.

"Why don'tcha crawl in under one o' them guns?" asked the gas guard. "They ought to take yuh in."

"It's worth a try," said Spike, and departed toward the guns. "If this ain't hard luck," he exclaimed, "I never had any. One o'clock in the mornin', no dugout, an' no blankets."

Spike's blankets, overcoat and slicker were still in the ditch outside the town where he had left them about twenty-four hours before.

"Simmons, wherever yuh are, I hope you're glad you lit them three candles. I don't wish yuh no hard luck, but I hope yuh got a —— good burn, right where it'll bother yuh the most."

Spike peered under one of the guns. There were a number of forms in there, but each was tightly wrapped in his blankets, like a worm in its cocoon. The nights in France are very cold, even in midsummer, and in the Autumn they are much colder. Spike's teeth rattled. The time was drawing on to two A. M., when human fires burn the lowest. Aching in every muscle, shivering, and only prevented by the cold from going to sleep standing up, Spike went over toward the machine guns.

The two gas guards watched his staggering progress. The machine gunners had dug individual fox-holes, little shallow gravelike places, about a foot deep, just large enough to lie down in, but a great protection against shell-fire. There was no room for an extra in any of those holes. Then Spike had a ray of hope. The telephone men had a good big dugout; he'd try them. There was no luck there, either. The dugout was full of all the riff-raff of the battery, cooks, spare gunners, the ration and water-cart drivers, and the telephone men themselves. A snake couldn't find room to sleep in there.

"Simmons," said Spike, "you got me into this, —— you, but I'd swap places with yuh, burn an' all. You got a bed and I ain't, and I'm tellin' yuh it's a —— cold night!"

Spike wandered aimlessly down hill, reeling and stumbling in his walk. The two guards still watched.

"I'll never be able to look at a candle again," he muttered. "Gee! I never thought of them old gun-pits! I bet there's some one in there."

Those gun-pits, he remembered, had board floors that were still intact. Warm and dry to sleep on, if he could find a rag to cover himself.

The gun-pit was occupied. It was dark there, but Spike could make out a row of quiet sleepers, cheek by jowl, along one side of the pit. He climbed down and cautiously explored with his hand. The blankets overlapped the last man a foot or more, and this blanket end Spike lifted carefully.

"Now I can sleep," he muttered. Then he silently lay down, and slowly, carefully, drew the blanket about himself. He looked up at the stars, sighed thankfully, and was instantly asleep.

Spike was too far from the watching guards for them to watch his movements, but they had seen him go into the shadow of the trees where the gun-pits were. He did not reappear. One of the guards began to chuckle to himself.

"What's bitin' yuh?" asked the other guard.

"I'm laughin' as that liaison guy," was the reply. "He went down to one o' them old gun-pits and I'll bet he's crawled in with the stiffs they got laid out in it."

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

As You Please

O'HALLORAN was a working man with a college education; which is not the rule. O'Halloran was exceptional in more ways than one. No one had ever been able to figure O'Halloran out—which did not trouble him, possibly, in part, because O'Halloran was not his name. He had signed himself so one night upon a rooming-house register, because, with the name in his mind, for some reason unknown to him, he was wondering how it would look in writing. He not only liked the look of it, but the sound of it also—that musical, jig-your-foot-along note in it. Lastly he liked it because the landlady, a fat woman with a freckled face and short legs, said after he had so signed himself—

"I says to meself w'en I sees you comin', I says, 'That looks like one o' they O'Hallorans.' "

O'Halloran thereafter stayed with the name, and the name with O'Halloran.

O'Halloran was an artist in his line. He sometimes worked an entire week; living comfortably upon the proceeds of that labor for the remainder of the month. At other times he did not work at all. Once, in a jerk-water town in San Joaquin Valley, because the town policeman said he was a hobo, he was put in the jug. He was too much of a gentleman to contradict the town policeman. Not that contradiction would have got him off his jail sentence, for the judges of the San Joaquin Valley are—well, ask any one who knows what they are; that's all!

Once O'Halloran got a job for a bank president; an ever-so-rich man with a pot stomach, a gold watch-chain tied across it, pinch-nose glasses on the bridge of his nose and a fat cigar in the corner of his mouth. O'Halloran took a fancy to the bank president; and, because he never happened around when O'Halloran happened to be taking a nap on the job, the bank president took a fancy to O'Halloran.

O'Halloran worked for the bank president a full three weeks, saving his money. When he quit the bank president wore a look of pained surprize.

"I thought you were a steady man," said he.

O'Halloran looked at the B. P.

"Steady? Three whole weeks! Ain't *that* steady?" said he.

"I had a man work for me for six years once," said the B. P.

"You thought you did, mister; but—he didn't! He was only a bloomin' monkey," said O'Halloran.

The day after O'H. quit working for the B. P., they met upon the sidewalk of the jerk-water town, calling itself a city because it had its own water-works, a wooden jail with two rooms, five grocery stores, seven churches, a female uplift society, and a woman's club.

"O'Halloran," said the B. P., "I'd like to have you go back to work for me."

"Yus, sir," said O'H. who never let on that he had once had a college education. "I'd like to meself if I felt that way; but I don't."

"I'm willing to give you a raise," said the B. P.

"Money in me socks," said O'H. "Go jingle 'em an' see!"

"Say, now—look here, Mr. O'Halloran, is there something wrong with you? You don't seem just right. I'm willing to pay the doctor bill on condition you'll go back to work for me," said the B. P. "Good men are scarce."

"That's that," said O'H., solemn as a judge with the indigestion from overeating—which is a way with judges—adding: "They are. I will not."

The B. P. took O'H. by the arm.

"Look here, O'Halloran, my man," said he, "you're all out of shape. Going to take you up to see the doctor."

At that moment there came around the corner of the block an old hobo, a roll of very dirty blankets on his back; holes in his knees and in the crown of his hat, black stubble ten or twenty days old upon his chin, a second-hand quill tooth-pick in the corner of his mouth, and a pair of eyes that looked as lamps look upon a rainy night, and his toes sticking out of both his boots. He caught the eye of O'H., and, just at that identical minute he winked—not a big wide-awake wink such as the girls behind the candy counters hand out toward quitting time to the young lads with new automobiles and coin in their breeches pockets, but the sort of wink that comes in the sky with the first rain at the end of the desert Summer in the San Joaquin Valley—the sort that sets the mocking-birds to whistling; a slow, soft, easy-going, "jig-your-foot-along, it's a good old world after all" sort of wink.

The old bo passed on down the street.

"There's a fellow should be in jail," said the B. P. "He ought to be breaking rock for the county roads. That sort of fellow is no good. He's a social parasite."

O'H. was jingling three weeks' pay in his breeches pocket.

"O'Halloran," said the B. P., "we've got a savings department in our bank, and we'll pay you four per cent. on your savings."

"Much obliged. Good day, sir," said O'H.

"Hold on a minute," cried the B. P. "When will you go back to work for me?"

"Since you are so insistent," said O'H., forgetful for a moment that he never let on to any one that he had ever had a college education, "I shall return to my customary employment at the usual time tomorrow morning."

"All right, O'Halloran! I knew you were a good man. You get a raise of ten dollars a month. See you later!" said the B. P., walking away. "Don't forget the savings account."

O'Halloran strolled off along the main street of the jerk-water town of the San Joaquin Valley, passing through the female women of the women's club, who were just entering their club-house to listen to a lecture about a party by the name of Shakespeare, who, never having heard of the valley of the San Joaquin nor of the jerk-water town, would not have been able to tell which was which, the president of the chamber of commerce and the —— himself had he met them at midday. But the female women of all the jerk-water towns—and there are no other sorts there—in the valley of the San Joaquin are exceedingly keen upon the pursuit of what is known as "the correct thing," otherwise "culture." As for boring the poor old ghost of Bill Shakespeare almost out of its white night-shirt—that has yet to enter their uncultured minds.

"Some dirt can not be tilled—not nohow," as O'Halloran would have said, forgetting his college education.

O'Halloran strolled on, jingling three weeks' pay in the pocket of the left-hand leg of his breeches, a queer sort of "rig-a-jig-jig" in both his feet—so much so, indeed, that the wife of one of the ministers of one of the seven churches said to the female woman president of the jerk-water uplift club—

"That horrid man's been drinking—the nasty thing!"

O'H. did not hear, nor, had he done so, would he have cared.

He strolled onward through the town; three different farmers stopping him to offer him a job, for O'H. was a big man and looked strong; besides having about him an air of innocence—as of a fellow who would be easy to haggle down in a wage deal or to skin in writing a pay-check.

Coming to the railway he walked down it until he came to where, beside an orange orchard, there had been a straw stack. There was still a little old straw left, blackened with time. In the straw, their hats upon the backs of their heads, their knees sticking through their pants, their chins covered with a ten or twenty days' stubble, were two hobos. O'Halloran sat down between them.

"I knowed you wuz one o' the b'ys be th' look o' yer face, between yer eyes, pard," said the old bo who had winked at him a while ago at the street corner. " 'Ave ye got any 'baccy?"

O'H., pulling out a sack, said—

"Help yourself."

" 'Ave ye any grub?" said the other. "We're all out, an' we both feels too blame tired to go a-rustlin'."

Down the track came a one-eyed tramp with one wooden leg and a yellow cur dog.

"Got any 'baccy, bos?" said he, stopping in front of the three.

O'H. handed him the sack.

"Help yourself," said he.

"Got any grub? I'm plumb out," said the wooden-legged tramp with one eye and a yellow cur dog.

"That dog o' yourn been brought up a' right?" asked O'H., looking up into the one eye of the wooden-legged tramp.

"Yep," said the other, lying full length upon the remains of the straw stack, his wooden leg cocked over the other leg like the boom end of a sail boat. " 'E's got a college eddication. I give it 'im meself."

O'H. took from his pocket a faded red bandanna handkerchief.

"Smell that—take a good sniff at it, purp," said he, holding the bandanna to the yellow dog's nose.

The yellow dog wagged his stump tail, taking a lick, with his long tongue, at O'Halloran's hand.

"Yer must be old school mates, pard. 'E knows yer," said the tramp who had winked at O'H. as he came around the corner.

"I reckon they's both on 'em got collidge eddications," said the one-eyed, wood-leg tramp.

"Purp," said O'H., "there's a cousin o' mine pearl-divin' at Dicky Minor's lunch-counter. Go get 'em—go find 'im."

Pearl-diving is, as all really cultured people know, washing dishes.

O'Halloran waved the old bandanna.

"That'll give you the scent, purp," said he; "it's me cousin's handkerchief."

Away went the yellow cur dog, a bit of paper torn from an old dry-goods box, lying beside the track, in his mouth; a few words in O'Halloran's writing upon it:

Fix up lunches for four o' the boys and one dog. Send them by the dog. Don't lose no time.

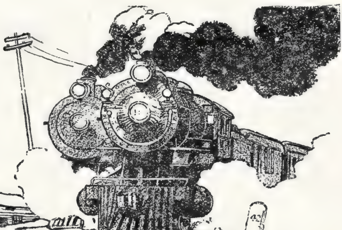
In less than ten minutes the yellow cur dog came trotting down the track, his stub tail going, jig-wag, jig-jig-wag, wag, jig, jig, so fast that he appeared to have a tail a foot wide.

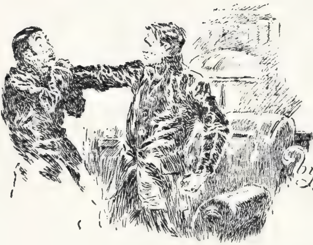
In less than five minutes the coffee was boiling in an old lard can; the four of them lying on their backs watching the clouds drift by, while they ate grub from Dicky Minor's lunch-counter.

That same night the female woman president of the jerk-water town's uplift society ran off with husband of the wife of one of the seven jerk-water preachers. The B. P. got an attack of apoplexy brought on by overeating and a head too full of figures—the coroner called it "heart failure"—whose wouldn't? The ghost of Will Shakespeare, sitting restfully beside the sleeping boss, stroked the back of the watchful yellow cur dog, while O'Halloran, awakening at midnight, arising upon one elbow, looked from an eye at the crescent moon sinking below the tree tops of an adjacent orange-grove, murmuring to himself:

"Three weeks—three weeks—three weeks—and I might have been here all the time with the rest o' the boys! Ah, what a wasted education!"

Which you may take, just *as you please.*





For the HONOR of the CLOTH*

by Patterson James

Author of "Sweet Apple Jimmy."

THE click of the latch warned Itsky that some one was at the door and he jerked his head up from behind the bar in sudden alert suspiciousness.

For he had arrived at a critical moment in the experiment he was performing and he resented the interruption as irritably as a scientist of nobler purpose might have done. For Itsky was a manufacturing chemist and his business was that of concocting the Very Old Stinger Rye with which he served his customers. Internal Revenue stamps and all similar Governmental red tape which prevented a man from making an honest dollar he hated and ignored. Why should he pay good money for whisky illicitly withdrawn from the government warehouses when he could make better stuff himself for almost nothing?

Besides, he knew what his trade wanted, liquid lightning which gave the delightful sensation of having swallowed an angry wildcat.

Neither did he need an official tester to tell him whether his product contained the requisite kick or not. One drink, given out of the goodness of his heart to any shivering floater drifting in at dawn to sponge an eye-opener, would indicate all the reaction he needed to confirm the potency of his product.

The only ingredient he demanded in the conduct of his work was freedom from distractions, and so he had chosen the early morning hours before trade opened up as the time when he was least liable to commercial interruptions.

But added to his natural resentment as an "alcoholemist" there was another emotion in the present instance. The man who had just entered was a stranger. All strangers were potential enemies. Instinctively he dropped his hand behind the bar until it rested on a heavy beer glass. Itsky had never listened to the gospel of preparedness, but he never took chances with any one who ordered a drink.

If they paid, well and good. But if they tried to sneak out while his back was turned a flying "schooner" glass dropped them in their tracks. It was a fast, wise bird that beat his throw to the door, and his record as a sharpshooter was almost perfect. But, because eternal vigilance is the price of getting what belongs to you, Itsky leaned on the shiny mahogany and waited.

The sudden heat of the room covered the newcomer's eye-glasses with steam and he stopped to wipe them clear with a crisp, new bank-note. Itsky's little pig eyes narrowed to two sullen slits as he saw the bill.

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* *"For the Honor of the Cloth," copyright, 1923, by Patterson James.*

So! As an ex-strong-arm thief himself he knew all the types of the underworld and convicts just released from the prison on the hill were an every day affair with him.

But this tall, lean, square-shouldered man with the deeply-lined face, and the steady, blue eyes boring into his, puzzled him. He was a "con" all right. The jail pallor, the new suit of clothes, and the fresh bank-note made that plain enough, but it was his air of detachment amounting almost to arrogant dignity that was new to Itsky. He wore his stiff white collar as if he liked the feel of it. His hands were strong but delicately made. A gentleman crook! The dislike of the man behind the bar deepened into hatred.

"A blithe day," began the stranger in a full, resonant voice, through which ran a little note of mockery.

Itsky glanced out at the storm and then at his customer.

"A nut," he decided. "Yeh! It's a nice day fer to take a long walk," he suggested.

The lean man laughed quietly.

"From the size of that façade decorating your front elevation I should say any kind of a day to walk would be excellent for you," he bantered. "You must stand fifteen minutes after each meal if you would preserve your waist-line."

Itsky's ears, thick as a cutlet, reddened angrily.

"The sting of snowflakes on a face long unaccustomed to them is a tonic," resumed the intruder. "I've been walking in the storm since daybreak. It's really wonderful after a prolonged siege of—a—isolation!"

"Whadda y' want?" growled Itsky.

"Your door looked so hospitable I thought I would rest, refresh myself, and invite my soul," answered his visitor.

"I ast yuh whadda y' want?" repeated the proprietor.

"I'd like a sleigh-ride," came the answer.

"Whadda y' tink dis place is, a livery-stable?" snarled the barkeeper.

The stranger's steady blue eyes softened pleadingly.

"I was just sprung from stir and I was tipped off that you could slip me a sniff of snow if I wanted it bad," he explained.

He rubbed his nose eagerly and scratched the back of his hand. Itsky knew the signs. A cocaine fiend with his "habit on" strong! He reached to the back bar and picked up a large sized salt-shaker.

"Four bits a shake!" he warned.

The crisp new bank-note was tossed on the bar and the shaker snatched from his hand with a single motion. Pounding it on the bar sharply to clear the holes in the cap, the stranger gave the container a quick flirt and caught the powder in the back of his hand. Jealously he scraped it together in a tiny heap and deposited it carefully in the spoon-like pocket he made between the tendons where his thumb joined his wrist.

Itsky watched him carefully. A "hop head" taking his "shot" was nothing new to him, but this one was different. Instead of the usual feverish eagerness of the addict there was a cold-blooded deliberateness about the man he was watching which fascinated him. The hand lifting the tiny mound of the drug to the sniffer's nostrils was as steady as a rock. The hand paused. Itsky grew prickly waiting.

"Why don't y' get it into yuh an' have it over?" he breathed thickly. "Don't nurse it all day!"

With a dry smile the stranger flipped the powder into the spittoon and brushed his hand clean.

"What's the matter?" burst out the saloon-keeper. "Whadda y' doin', kiddin' me?"

"Just a little exercise of the will," was the explanation. "My change, please?"

"I give it to yuh!" said Itsky indignantly.

The other's voice assumed the chill of the ice on the window-panes. His long jaw tightened.

"Really?" he drawled. "Well, suppose you give it to me again."

A dirty bill and some change dropped on the bar from Itsky's fist.

"I got so excited watchin' yuh go after that stuff I musta fergot," he explained.

"All silver, please! I don't wish to contaminate my new suit with that filthy bill," said the stranger. "Now, I'll have a drink of whisky—out of a sealed bottle."

"You're a fly bird, ain't you!" sneered Itsky.

" 'The children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light,' " quoted the drinker. "The reputation of that concoction you were making behind the bar when I came in has traveled farther than you can imagine.

Itsky glowered at him sourly.

"What was yuh in fer?" he asked.

"The commonest breach of all law, not

minding my own business," retorted the stranger serenely. "Please don't let me detain you from your labor of love."

He turned away from the bar and lighted the cigaret he had rolled. With his foot he pushed aside a wooden box, filled with sawdust and decorated with tobacco quids, which did service as a cuspidor, and standing close to the white-hot, pot-bellied stove he made leisurely inspection of the saloon.

Down one side of the long room ran a line of mirrors that were almost opaque with dirt and fly-specks; on the other stood a row of barrels that, thanks to Itsky's industry, were inexhaustible. Sprawled out snoring between the barrels were the victims of what was contained in them. The free-lunch counter was in its early morning dishabille.

A wide platter that had been heaped with steaming beans the night before was now a bare and polished surface from which the last solitary legume had been speared. The bologna plate was skinned clean. A big bowl for sliced onions was nothing now but vinegar—and a haunting odor. In a dirty glass filled with water stood a bunch of forks, waiting in greasy readiness for the next attack.

On the other side of the stove a huddle of gray rags stirred into life. A pair of sticky eyes stared in solicitation at Itsky's visitor. Like an aged spider the thing seized the coin the stranger tossed to him and shuddered over to the bar for a drink. The stink of wet and dirty clothing hung like a pestilential cloud over the room.

The white-faced man inspecting Itsky's barroom for the first time was altogether conscious of its horribleness, but after the hell he had just left it was at least tolerable. Half of his ten-year term his cell had been shared by a consumptive yeggman. The reminder of his sentence was made hideous by a degenerate young sneak thief, who went mad just before his time was up. The snoring of the wretches sleeping in the sawdust between the barrels was ecstatic discord after the incessant coughing of the cell block. The howl of the wind outside was like organ music to ears that had listened so long to the mouthings of the human animals writhing through the interminable hours of prison nights.

With the same spirit of amused indifference which had rendered him impregnable against the devastating influences of the penitentiary be began to study his face in the fly-specked mirror.

He was not so much altered after his long stretch of confinement. He was thinner and grayer, but the change added distinction to him. He was more erect now because he had shaken off for good his drug habit. That was the only debt of gratitude he owed to the old warden who had freed him of that particular, personal devil. True, he nearly died during the period of exorcism, but the agony of the cure had picked off the unholy fat of dissipation from his face. Suddenly he leaned forward and scanned his reflection more closely. Then he drew back in swift and bitter resentment.

The face staring back at him from the mirror was not his own at all, but that of his uncle, the Reverend Canon Theodoric Battersby Chowningford-Hulmes, dead these many years. There was the same high, broad forehead, the eyes deep set under shaggy brows. He always had the hawk-like Hulmes nose with its thin nostrils and its broadened bridge, but the Hulmes jaw and the solid chin were, for the first time, noticeable. Even the little hollows at the temples and the slightly sunken cheeks of his uncle as he last saw him were present. He grinned at himself cynically.

What a fine, savage laugh Fate must be having! Here he was, the blackguard last survivor of a long line of notable ecclesiastics whittled and filed by a prison sentence into an ironic facial composite of all his forbears! And the most ribaldly humorous touch of all was that his resemblance was closest to his uncle Theodoric whom he had hated in his boyhood, despised in his youth, and for whom since his death he had only an abiding contempt.

He would not have cared had he grown to look like the father he had never seen, who had been a regimental chaplain and who had gone down like a soldier and a gentleman in an Afghan pass under a score of enemy knives, but not until he had taken bloody toll for his passing.

It would have been endurable had the resemblance he displayed been to that old warrior bishop who had died under the battlements of Jerusalem in one of the early crusades with a heap of Saracens for his pillow.

But to be the living image of Theodoric, that narrow-minded, ice-blooded, dehumanized cleric with his fanatical pride of family and his idiotic, interminable pratings on the glory of the religious vocation was too utterly preposterous!

His face grew savage as he remembered his childhood. He had hated it completely while he was passing through it. He hated it more than ever in the retrospect.

For Theodoric had taken it as a matter of course that the lonely, heart-starved boy who had come into his charge after his father's death would go up for the Church. Therefore every act of boyish mischievousness was construed as a direct interposition of Beelzebub to cheat the Lord out of the services of a Chowningford-Hulmes. The smallest display of the taint of original sin by his nephew had to be eradicated remorselessly, and so he buried the lad under a mountain of pious obligations which brought on a spiritual nausea from which the victim never recovered. The sullen aloofness to which the boy's yearning for affection and his burning loneliness drove him were in Theodoric's eyes merely the manifestations of a satanic stubbornness which could only be removed by a doubled dose of religious practises.

The horror of those Sundays long ago still had the power, even now, to stir into active rage the man warming himself by the stove in Itsky's barroom. What a torture they were; the early rising, the prayers before the silent, meager breakfast; the morning service which could not be slept through because he was obliged to write a synopsis of it before luncheon; the pious reading after luncheon wherein he learned of Infant Damnation and things of kindred lightness; the interminable hours of the afternoon consumed in studying catechism when his little feet ached to go racing through the woods and across the sweet, green field; the evening service and the long night prayers in which Theodoric seemed to be engaged in an angry altercation with the Almighty over some intricacy of human conduct; the monotonous week days without a vestige of play; the birchings; and the unending lectures on the dignity of the ecclesiastical life.

Once when he showed a leaning toward the Old Testament his uncle had smiled approvingly. But the smile vanished and the rod appeared when Theodoric discovered that his nephew's interest in things biblical started with a picture of Judith hacking off the head of Holofernes and ended with a steel engraving which showed Jael leaning over the sleeping Sisera with a large hammer in one hand and a very sharp spike in the other. What he never discovered was that in the small boy's eyes both Holofernes and Sisera bore a vital resemblance to his reverend self.

HULMES chuckled to himself as he recalled the moment of molten rebellion when he had left off tricky deceit to escape the Sunday terrors and had deliberately left the gloom of the rectory for the society of the village incorrigibles, who to glut their dislike for Theodoric had sent his nephew home that night properly tipsy as a kind of vicarious vengeance.

The memory of the canon's burst of rage with its startling unexpectedness amused him now as much as it had terrified him then. It was a blinding exposition of the fact that the old Adam was not quite absent from his uncle's make-up. But the adventure served its purpose because it opened the door of freedom for him. The next day he had been packed off to a school where the discipline, if just as rigorous as that of his uncle's house, had the merit of being different.

Theodoric got scant satisfaction through the separation. The reports that came to him of his nephew's rebellious attitude toward all law and all order indicated that he had merely removed the presence of the evil doer, not changed him. He consoled himself with the thought that the years might bring improvement. It was a delusion, for the university only served to confirm his nephew in iniquity. For the first time in the history of the Chowningford-Hulmes' the family name was connected with the most radically radical students' societies. The fig tree had brought forth a thistle. His brother's son was a congenital rebel, a Socialist, a Sinn Feiner, an internationalist, a disgrace, a God-knows-what-not. He would have forgotten him cheerfully were such a thing possible. But it was not possible.

With a devotion, whose mockery was plain even to the non-analytical uncle, his nephew insisted upon spending at least one month in the Summer with him. It was thirty-one days, never thirty, of unmitigated torture. Then was he bombarded with shocking questions on faith and morals which had been stored up since the last visit. Then was the mass of carefully accumulated and diabolically abstruse theological difficulties unloaded on him by the studiously apologetic youth. Hulmes could shut his eyes now and see his slow-witted relative writhe under his attack.

Then Theodoric died under circumstances which raised a maddening wall of mystery between himself and his nephew. Hulmes hated mysteries. What possible reason could Theodoric have for getting himself charred to a cinder trying to rescue nameless brats from the village orphanage! They did not belong to his creed; there was no one to care whether they lived or not; Theodoric was a fanatical celibate and children always annoyed him. Moreover, he was a physical coward.

While the burial services were being read and his uncle lowered into a hero's grave he racked his brain for an explanation of the motive that had sent Theodoric into the fiery furnace. Of course it was a finish that a real man might envy. But then Theodoric wasn't a man, not by any stretch of the imagination. Why did he do it? What did it mean?

The thing remained an inexplicable mystery, and though its solution grew less important as the years passed still it would recur with exasperating perplexity and at the most unaccountable moments. Like now, for example.

Hulmes' spirit loathed being baffled. He was a remorseless investigator of life in all its phases. The vagaries of human conduct piqued his unquenchable curiosity. Well, he had gone down into the pit in his researches and he had paid the price. He had set out to penetrate the psychology of the drug addict; now he knew all about it. The criminal world had fascinated him and he had plunged into it. Society, morality, public policy were nothing. Every man was the captain of his soul—if he had one. Knowledge was the worthiest end of living. Not knowledge to be handed on through books so that others might profit but the gratification of the individual craving to know. That was living.

A raid on a gang of hoboes with whom he was traveling, his false identification as a notorious English thief and confidence man, and the willingness of an ambitious prosecuting-attorney to make any one a stepping-stone to the governorship, combined to give him intimate acquaintance with the operation of a penitentiary.

He had accepted his sentence as an item of a bill that had to be paid. He had served his term with a cynical stolidity which was the best protection against the degeneracy of prison life. He had come out fit in mind and body and knowing a vast amount more than he had taken in. Yet here he was still wondering over the puzzle of Theodoric's death.

He pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and settled himself to read until "Rhode Island Red" came to tell him what time their train left the water-tank for the trip to the coast. He ran his eyes down the news columns. War, death, scandal, murder, divorce! The same old stuff! He yawned. A scrap of news hidden away on the theatrical page attracted his attention.

> "Happy Jack" Klimpke, at one time a famous variety comedian, was found dead last night at Conley's Lodging House on Eighth Street. Klimpke, was known from one end of the country to the other by the older generation of show-goers as "The Applesauce King." The body has been taken to Shuttenberg's Morgue from which, if it is not claimed, it will be buried in Potter's Field.

The newspaper dropped to Hulmes' lap. The Applesauce King was dead and none so mean to do him honor! Of all the memories of the black years in his prison hole, the annual appearance of Happy Jack was the only one that held in it a bit of pleasure.

Every Christmas morning a vaudeville show was given in the prison chapel. The shiningest stars in the variety sky had appeared at one time or another on that little platform. Famous prima donnas had filled the chapel with the glorious golden melody of their million-dollar voices. But no one was ever welcomed with the uproarious delight, the spontaneous hilarity, and the perfect understanding that greeted the roly-poly, red-nosed little comedian with the whisky-ruined tenor voice that grew whiskier and huskier each year.

The newspapers might tell how the tears of the prisoners flowed when Mme. Tynpannini sang "Home Sweet Home" (a selection which Hulmes always felt was rather rubbing it in), but there never was any account of the dry sobs that racked the audience when Happy Jack wrung the heart strings of every man present with the broken notes of "A Handful of Earth from Mother's Grave." High salaried comedians might rattle off their latest and most scintillant jokes to hearty laughter. But it remained for The Applesauce King in response to the shouted demand for the story from which he got his title, to collect the real honors of the show.

A ghost of a smile parted Hulmes' lips as he recalled Happy Jack's recital of the tragedy of the traveling man who came late for supper to the country hotel and got nothing to eat from the skinflint landlord but dried apples and hot water. He could still hear the hurrying strains of the orchestra, as The King pictured the landlord counting his ill-gotten gold in the silent hours of the night and the sudden crash of cymbals which told of the explosion in the traveling man's bedroom.

How the music would gallop as Happy Jack carried his auditors up to the hotel stairs two at a time with the landlord! How the big negro lifer would thump his bass drum as the guest's door was broken down by the terrified boniface and the wailing sadness of "Hearts and Flowers", as Happy Jack reached the climax in which the landlord fell into the room and died buried in a sea of applesauce! And what a tornado of cheers swept the chapel as The King bowed and bowed and bowed!

It was a long time since Happy Jack Klimpke had seen his name in front of a regular vaudeville theater. His monologue was too antiquated for the managers and he was likely to turn up for rehearsals Monday morning in a perfect state of alcoholic preservation. But he was always a riot at the prison. The convicts knew there was no condescension in his appearance there. The other actors were great, of course, but they were different. Happy Jack simply reached out his short and chubby arms and folded them to a heart that *knew*. Perhaps something of the tragedy of his own life gave his art, for art it was, its unfailing appeal. Whatever it was, he always left behind him a trail of sunshine that lasted for weeks.

EACH year he grew a little closer to the gray-clad brethren as their wise eyes saw he was getting nearer and nearer the ragged edge of things. Then he came no more. But memory of his rosy face and crimsoned nose bloomed perenially.

And now all that was left of the funmaker was "remains", awaiting the oblivion of Potters' Field. The merrymaker who had given so lavishly of his merriment to make the world's outcasts forget their misery was to be thrown into a pauper's grave. That would not do at all.

Hulmes fingered the change Itsky had given him. It wasn't enough to bury a sparrow but he could say good-by and good-luck to a friend and an artist. He knew the men in the stark cells on the hill would be glad to have him do that much for them.

"Don't slam the door," growled the scowling Itsky, as his annoying customer stepped out into the blizzard.

JUST where the slum impinged on the smart residential section of the city, as a spotless lace ruffle almost sweeps a muddy gutter, Hulmes found Shuttenberg's Morgue. A bell tinkled shrilly as he opened the door. An old scrubwoman in a soiled dress, her head encased in a dusty cloth, was sweeping the floor. In answer to his question, she pointed to a door marked "Office." There he found the proprietor, a sallow-faced man with a stubbly growth of sandy beard, sitting on a high stool behind the counter, making up accounts with a bit of pencil in a dog-eared copy-book. He wore no collar and under pressure of mathematical excitement his prominent Adam's Apple ran up and down his skinny throat like the marker on an abacus.

"Is Happy Jack still here?" Hulmes asked.

"Twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six dollars and sixteen cents," reckoned the undertaker, totaling up his column of figures. "The remains is in the back room," he said, looking up with interest.

"I'd like to see him," said Hulmes.

The undertaker scuttled down from his chair and offered his hand.

"I'm glad you come," he said. "It seemed sort of lonesome round here with nobody comin' in to see him. Step this way, please."

He drew aside a dingy curtain, and they were in the back room.

The walls were hung with musty black. There was the mingled scent of disinfectant and the almighty odor of Death. Happy Jack lay in a plain box coffin, where the light of a window high in the ceiling fell on his face. The wear of years and dissipation had disappeared. The claw marks of disappointment and failure were gone. His features wore the expectant, serene smile of a boy going to meet an understanding father.

"He's a beautiful corpse, aint't he?" whispered Shuttenberg. "He's laid out lovely, I think. The city only pays ten bucks, but I stretched a point for him. I'm sort of connected with the show business myself. My wife's cousin plays tuba with the Three Ikes Carnival Company. I'm glad to do something regular for Happy. He made me laugh many a time! Are you an actor?"

Something misty passed Hulmes' cold eyes.

"No," he answered slowly. "He just made me laugh, too. When are the services?"

"We just bury him from here," said Shuttenberg. "They ain't no preachers round here, 'ceptin the one at that big church five blocks up. You might 'a' seen the steeple. It's the swellest church in town, but nacherally they don't have no truck with morgue stiffs."

"Any clergyman will conduct a funeral service if he is asked to do it," protested Hulmes. "I knew one who would swim the Atlantic to favor us if we could only reach him. It's part of their bag of tricks."

"Well, I don't aim to go scootin' round in the snow huntin' up no preacher," explained the undertaker, scratching his stubble. "I done the best job I could for our friend already, but I ain't no miracle-worker. I know the man at that big church wouldn't come nohow!"

"I'm sure you are wrong," said Hulmes. "Suppose I go and see him myself? I think Happy would appreciate a little attention, don't you?"

"Preachers is nice, if you can get 'em," agreed the undertaker, "but don't be gone long. I've got to leave for the buryin' ground directly. It's quite some drive out there and the grave-diggers made an' awful holler about gettin' the grave ready, as 'tis. If 'twasn't that I'm connected with the show business The King might of went to the dissectin' room up to the college.

There was no difficulty, even in the blinding storm, finding the rectory of St. Saint's. It was as eye-compelling as the great Gothic pile to which it clung. A ponderous man-servant opened the door.

"Tell your master I wish to see him," said Hulmes in his resonant voice.

The servant looked at him contemptuously.

"What is the name?" he inquired.

"A distant cousin of the man who went down from Jericho," was the answer as the caller stepped into the hall. "Your master will understand!"

The servant disappeared, eying resentfully Hulmes' wet shoes.

The hallway in which the visitor waited was rich in studied simplicity. There was a pleasant warmth about everything, from the pictures on the wall to the soft hues of the rugs on the polished floor. From the depths of the dusky hall came the soft chime of a clock. The chair in which he sat was wide and comfortable. He relaxed luxuriously.

"I must ask you to be brief," a cold voice broke in on his thoughts. "I have an engagement to address the Civic Club at luncheon and it is almost time."

Hulmes roused himself and looked at the speaker, who stood with his watch in his hand. The Reverend Clarence Droon was a handsome man, tall and well-made. His face was round and pink, and a faint odor of perfume came from his freshly shaved jowl. With a glance Hulmes took in the carefully-cut clothes, the smart shoes, the immaculate linen, and the general air of brisk well-being. It was the closest he had been to a clergyman in ages. A brilliant contrast to the ascetic Theodoric, he thought.

"I have come to ask you to read the funeral services over an old and very good friend of mine," he said quietly.

Mr. Droon frowned.

"I have heard of no one dying in my parish," he said. "Who is he?"

"He is a stranger to you but I'm sure for the good he did to others, you will be glad to honor him. It isn't far from here.

There was something compelling in Hulmes' voice.

"The car, Mr. Droon," interrupted the ponderous man-servant.

Hulmes waited silently.

"It's a great inconvenience," grumbled the rector, "but I suppose I can stop a few minutes on my way."

A limousine, upholstered in wine-colored cloth, waited at the curb. The chauffeur, smothered in furs like a great bear, shifted in amazement to stare at Hulmes when he gave the address.

"Was this man of my faith?" asked Mr. Droon, as the powerful car plowed through the storm to Shuttenberg's.

"I heard him say once he belonged to the round church, the world, because the devil couldn't corner him in it," said Hulmes dryly.

The clergyman turned sharply and looked at him.

"Strange remark for a Christian," he commented. "Who was he?"

"The Applesauce King, a vaudeville actor," answered Hulmes. "He is to be buried in Potters' Field as soon as the services are over."

The clergyman was petrified with horror as the car drew up to the sidewalk but before he realized it he was standing in the ante-room of the morgue. His dumfounded gaze took in the sordid surroundings and the unkempt undertaker. He glared at the name on the window. The pastor of the city's most fashionable church holding services over a dead tramp in Shuttenberg's Morgue! An actor named The Applesauce King! Already he could see the flaring headlines in the papers, his outraged parishioner's apoplectic astonishment, and the pained faces of his trustees.

"What kind of a farce is this?" he breathed angrily. "Are you trying to make a laughing stock of me? Dragging me out a day like this on a fool's errand to help bury some drunken mountebank from a morgue!"

He strode to the door.

Hulmes laid a detaining hand on his arm.

" 'A cup of cold water, in My Name'," he quoted softly.

Mr. Droon jerked his arm free.

"I haven't time to listen to your impertinent blasphemies," he barked.

"What of your duty?"

That was the last straw!

"I don't have to be instructed in my duty by you," the minister managed to articulate, as he tore open the door and rushed to his waiting car.

Hulmes' eyes were blazing as he turned to the gaping undertaker and Shuttenberg grew frightened at the deadly pallor of his face.

"I told you," said the undertaker. "You can't blame him! You can't expect a swell parson to waste his time in a place like mine. If I had a mortuary chapel it'd be different. His people wouldn't stand for it."

He ran his fingers along the edge of his shirt-band.

"Well, as long as they ain't going to be no service, I better be startin' with the remains. Like as not the hole's full of snow by now." He looked at Hulmes' angry face. "It don't seem only half-done, not to have nothin' said," he said. "Couldn't you say somethin' yourself? You look like a preacher!"

Say something himself! The idea stung Hulmes out of his rage. Why not? What could be more fitting after all than that ex-convict should conduct the funeral service a clergyman had refused. He could piece it out with fragments of the service he had heard Theodoric read so often and with bits from the rituals of other creeds he knew, sentences that had impressed him by the sheer beauty of their thought in years gone by.

"I'll try," he agreed soberly.

"Wait till I put on my collar and tie," begged Shuttenberg.

He was back instantly with a shining celluloid collar and a black, ready-made bow tie.

The Applesauce King, all ignorant of the trouble he was causing, smiled on serenely, and with the scrubwoman and the undertaker for a congregation, Hulmes began his service. The words came slowly at first, then with increasing quickness, as the scroll of his memory unwound.

He stood at the head of the coffin, the light from the window in the roof shining faintly on his face. The voice was the voice of all the long-dead Chowningford-Hulmes'; the figure that shook with the poignancy of the pleading was the ghost of his father, and Theodoric, and the others. But like a thing outside him, his soul stood apart raging at the rector of St. Saint's.

"Enter not into judgment on Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man be justified unless through Thee he find pardon for all his sins," he began.

"We shall rise again, but we shall not all be changed!"

So Happy might rise—if resurrection there was—thought Hulmes, bearing in his hands his only plea for pardon, the tears of his own heart and the hearts of the world's forgotten ones to whom he had brought a moment of forgetfulness. The rector of St. Saint's, too, must rise for the blinding light of judgment, but what would he have to offer in his well-kept hands?

"Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord!"

"Lord, hear my voice, and let my cry come unto Thee," the scrubwoman answered faintly.

They finished the psalm, the old woman's quavering brogue alternating with Hulmes' sonorous tones.

"Peace amid Thy sheep accord,
Keep me from the tainted horde,
Set me in Thy sight, O Lord."

Those were the words, but the picture the speaker saw was the luncheon at the City Club where the rector of St. Saint's sat at his thick soup, like Dives at his groaning table!

"And with Lazarus, once a beggar, mayest thou have rest evertlasting," finished Hulmes softly.

The scrubwoman was wiping her eyes. The undertaker's Adam's apple raced excitedly, as he shook him by the hand.

"Elegant," he whispered. "Elegant! There wasn't a bit of religion in it."

He placed the cover of the coffin over Happy's smiling face.

"Couldn't be finer, old boy, if you was the headliner at the Comique," he breathed into the cold ear.

The bell over the outer door tinkled. Shuttenberg tiptoed out, and back, like a polite shadow.

"It's the wagon for The King," he said to Hulmes, holding out a pair of soiled white cotton gloves. "I only got two pair," he explained. "We don't use no pall-bearers as a rule, but I think Happy would like 'em."

TOGETHER they lifted the box into the wagon and drove away. The scrubwoman stood in the doorway, watching, her eyes still wet and the corner of her apron held to her quivering old mouth, until the storm swallowed them.

Hulmes sat on the coffin, wrapped in the blanket the undertaker threw over him. Dumbly he watched the horse plodding the dreary miles to the cemetery. The glow of the funeral service was gone and in its place a cold nausea set in as he thought of Mr. Droon.

When they reached the cemetery the growling grave-diggers wasted no ceremony. They dumped the coffin into the hole hurriedly, and covered it up, shoveling quick to get warm. Shuttenberg looked questioningly at Hulmes when the grave was filled, but he shook his head. Once was enough to play preacher!

"The King is dead! Long live the King!" he said quietly.

The shadows of the early night were thickening when the long drive back to the city ended. Suddenly an electric light shot into life through the snow and darkness. One by one, the street lamps began to blaze mistily through the flying white flakes. It was like a woman putting on her jewels. Hulmes felt the chill of the storm. Hunger gnawed at him. He touched the undertaker on the arm. Shuttenberg stopped the horse, and they alighted at a cheerfully lighted saloon to get a drink.

Hulmes pulled off the soggy white gloves, and handed them to the other.

"Good-by, and thank you," he said.

"Good-by, brother," answered Shuttenberg, solemnly.

He fingered the gloves thoughtfully for an instant, and then, as they shook hands, he pressed them into Hulmes' grasp.

"Just a little souvenir of the occasion," he said, and was gone.

Hulmes climbed on a high stool at the lunch bar and ordered his meal. He was ravenous and ate like a starving wolf. The saloon porter came and hung a pink bulletin sheet on a nail near him. He scanned it idly. In one column racing news from Juarez jostled a despatch telling of the blizzard raging in the east. He hoped Rode Island Red would not be late for their appointment at Itsky's and that their train would be on time. He couldn't get into tropical sunshine too quickly.

Under "Today's Events" was a scant report of an address given by the rector of St. Saint's at the Civic Club. Hulmes' face hardened as he read the mealy platitude which the reporter had culled from Mr. Droon's speech on "The Duties of Christian Citizenship." "When his duty is clearly defined, the Christian citizen permits no selfish personal consideration to interfere with its accomplishment," ran the quotation. He could almost hear the words rolled from under Mr. Droon's tongue.

"Christian Citizenship!" said Hulmes to

himself. "The fat hireling ran away from his duty this very day!" Not much like Theodoric, he mused.

Then as a blinding streak of lightning penetrates the darkness, the explanation of his uncle's death spelled itself in hot letters across his brain. Of course! That was it! He sneered at his own stupidity in not recognizing the motive years ago. It was the "clearly defined duty" of the Christian citizen which had sent Theodoric to his death in the blazing orphanage. He laughed grimly as he pictured the Reverend Clarence Droon extinguishing himself in any such fashion. Poor old Theodoric!

Suddenly the anger that had died down in him while he ate flamed up afresh. Certainly it was an obligation for some Christian citizen to set Mr. Droon right about the duties of his cloth. He bought another drink and paid his check. Surely the inherited instinct of the Chowningford-Hulmes', and the case of Theodoric qualified him as an expert in matters of pastoral obligation. He looked at the clock. Rhode Island Red could wait a while.

A broad path of light flooded from the door of St. Saint's rectory when the ponderous man-servant opened it in answer to Hulmes' peremptory ring. His bald brow wrinkled reprovingly as he caught sight of the visitor.

"Mr. Droon is engaged. There is a dinner party. He can not see you," he protested to the figure that brushed past him into the warm hall.

Through an open door Hulmes saw the library. From its shelves the rich bindings of the books shone darkling in the soft light of the fireplace.

"I will wait here," he said calmly. "Tell your master a messenger from the King has arrived."

Hulmes locked the door into the hall and stood with his back to the grateful heat of the fire, waiting. From the dining-room came the chatter of voices and the tinkle of glass and silver. Well-bred laughter came to his ears, long unaccustomed to such sounds. A door opened, and dressed in dinner clothes Mr. Droon entered. A vanishing smile was on his lips. In the corner of his mouth a tiny spot of grease caught the glow from the fireplace and shone comfortably. He made a pleasant pink-and white contrast to the gaunt figure from whose sopping shoes two little pools of water had formed on the thick rug.

"Good evening," said Hulmes in his best manner.

The clergyman started back angrily as he recognized the speaker.

"I have no money to give you," he exploded angrily. "Go to the organized charities."

He started to leave the room.

"I want your advice on a matter of conscience," hurried Hulmes. "A scruple bothers me."

"I do not believe in auricular confession," broke in the rector hurriedly. "My guests are waiting."

"It won't take long," explained the other. "I want to know if I should permit any personal feeling of pity to keep me from doing to another something which would be sure to cause him great pain just now but might prove of great benefit to him in the future?"

Mr. Droon pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"When his duty is clearly defined the Christian citizen should permit no selfish consideration to interfere with its accomplishment!" he quoted unctuously.

The gaunt figure stepped out into the center of the room.

"I presume you are familiar with the episode of the money-changers in the Temple?" he inquired. "And what happened to them and why?"

Something in his voice made the clergyman's rosy wattles pale apprehensively. He turned to the door of escape. Quickly Hulmes stepped behind him and softly turned the key in the lock.

"Listen, you greasy desecrator of the cloth you wear!" he began, his voice slashing like a knife as his long arm reached out to the rector's coat collar.

The cloth was soft as silk to his touch, and his grip tightened savagely.

"All my life I have hated some one because I thought he was the meanest, narrowest, most bigoted thing that ever lived."

He shook the quaking figure in his clutch.

"He belonged to your cloth and when you ran away from that slum this morning, I realized that he was as much an honor to it as you are a disgrace."

Mr. Droon's eyes were bulging from their sockets. His fingers were buried in the muscles of Hulmes' arms and his blue lips begged inarticulately.

"You are a young man," resumed Hulmes.

"You have a lifetime of usefulness ahead of you, if you are started right. Anyway I came here to do my duty as a Christian citizen and teach you by inflicting a little personal pain what misery other people experience."

He drew back his fist to strike. The rector launched a flabby blow at the mocking face before him.

He raised his voice in a shriek for help. All that could be heard, above the chatter of the dinner guests in the next room, was a pitiful squeak. Then the grip on his coat collar relaxed as Hulmes with a gesture of disgust brushed his hands together as if he had touched something unclean.

"But now that I come to think about it I'm sure it wouldn't be of the slightest use," he said scornfully as he unlocked the door to the hall. "Besides, I'm not sure that Theodoric would approve at all. Good night!"

AN HOUR later a black monster steamed out of the night and roared past the water-tank where Hulmes and his red-headed companion stood, waiting.

"That's the Overland Limited," explained Red. "Nothin' doin' on that rattler! She scoops her slops on th' fly down th' road about twenty miles an' th' water washes up outa th' trough all over th' front of th' blind baggage. 'Limp th' Goofer' hopped her last week, an' they chopped him off next mornin' froze into a hunk of ice. Th' fast freight we want is right behind her."

They watched the long line of snow-covered cars disappear into the blizzard.

"Some night, bo, hah?" continued Red. "No snow-birdin' on th' decks tonight. Th' rods is th' dope. Yuh kin rest on them like a baby in a cradle."

Hulmes chuckled audibly.

"What's th' idee?" inquired Red. "You been doin' that an' lookin' like th' cat that swallyed th' canary ever since I met yuh."

"I've had a great day, Red," laughed Hulmes.

"Doin' wot?"

"My duty as a Christian citizen."

"You're th' first guy ever got a laugh out o' doin' that," snorted Red. "Howja like it as fur as yuh went?"

Again Hulmes chuckled happily.

"Not bad," he confessed. "I shouldn't wonder if I got the habit."

The scream of a whistle rose above the storm.

"Here comes our side-door Pullman," interrupted Red. "It'll be a cinch tonight. They ain't no shacks goin' to be out weather like this huntin' fer bos like us."

Red selected a big automobile car with a network of rods underneath it. They crawled in when the train got under way.

"Some class to us, bo," said Red. "Floppin' in a swell hotel ain't got nothin' on this. Crawl up here, where th' wind won't get at yuh. This is some different from takin' it on th' run wit' a flyin' dive an' a yard full of bulls at yer heels."

Slowly the train threaded its way through the maze of switch lights. Red and blue and green pin-points of fire flashed past Hulmes' eyes as the long line of cars swung like a great snake out of the yards, and roared onto the main line. The steady *click-click* of the wheels passing over the rail joints sounded to Hulmes like the syncopation of Happy Jack Kimpke's wooden dancing-shoes.

"This is th' life," sighed Red contentedly. "In the Summer we fool th' thermometer wit' th' coolin' zeppers of th' surf-swep' seabord! An' we fly to th' balmy breezes of th' soutlan' when Wintertime comes round."

"Uh, huh," said Hulmes.

"Before we know it we'll be in th' land of promise," rhapsodized Red. "Day after tomorra th' perfume of th' mysterious islands of th' blue Pacific will be brung to the nostrils of th' weary wayfarer on th' wings of th' mornin'. Perhaps you perfer th' pine-clad mountings?" he inquired solicitously.

"I've changed my itinerary," replied Hulmes pensively. "I'm going to take a long sea voyage."

"Ah! To th' Sout' Seas of th' Andilles?"

"No! To a little cemetery in Warwickshire, to make an apology to a dead man, the Reverend Canon Theodoric Battersby Chowningford-Hulmes," came the answer.

"For the love of sweet potatas!" cried Red, almost falling off the rods in his amazement. "Apologize to a stiff wid a monnaker like that! What fer? He'll never hear you!"

The noise of the train settled into a droning lullaby. There was a long interval of silence.

"I'm not so sure about that last," said Hulmes softly. "I think Theodoric will hear my voice all right. He's been waiting a long time for what I have to say and it's coming to him."

A PATHFINDER WITHOUT FAME

by Michael J Phillips

Author of "Bars of Gold," "'Getting' Doctor Cameron," etc.

A HANDSOME, soldierly man, mounted on a fine white horse, rode along a narrow California cañon road. Behind him were two others, a cowboy on a tough little range pony, whose riata and huge, clumsy-looking saddle proclaimed his trade; the second, attired like his leader in the uniform of the United States Army. The time was December, 1846.

Ahead of them on the right was a long, low adobe house, its corner abutting on the roadway. Behind the house were corrals, barns and other buildings of adobe, the group forming a *rancheria*, or ranch-headquarters of considerable size.

The leader halted, and raised his hand. At the signal two Indians appeared in view, one on either side of the trail. They were perhaps a quarter of a mile distant up the gentle slopes of the foothills, and heretofore had been hidden by the screen of live oaks on the green sides. These flankers, bare backed, and riding their wild, wiry horses recklessly, plunged down the declivity. On reaching the road, they reined the horses to their haunches, and fell in behind the other pair of bodyguards.

The Indians, feathered, were in full war-paint. And, like the white men, they were heavily armed. In addition to the long rifle each carried a stout lance, ornamented below the metal head with the scalp-lock of an enemy.

The leader of the party gave his curveting horse the rein, and the beautiful beast swung into a swift lope. The others thundered at his heels. Near the adobe the officer stopped his horse with a touch, so that it slid along the smooth surface of the ground, all four feet bunched. He dismounted and handed the reins to the cowboy. While his attendants clustered about a white-oak timber, ten feet high and two feet thick, which was sunk upright in the ground, the leader turned to the main door of the adobe.

As he approached, a man stooped his head to come out of the house. He, too, was of impressive appearance. He was more than six feet tall, broad-shouldered, and beginning to show the paunch of late middle age. He was tremendously powerful, it was plain, and his step was light, though firm.

He wore the black, flat-topped felt hat of the Spanish don, with its low crown. A pair of leather thongs, tied under the chin, served to hold the hat firmly on his head when he was in the saddle. His eyes were bold and blue, the eyes of a resourceful, courageous and dominant person. His

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face was clean-shaven, except for luxuriant brown side-burns extending well down his face.

Though he was unmistakably not Spanish, the settler swept off his hat with something of the grace of the high-caste Spaniard. The gesture comported well with the stock, the mark of a gentleman in those days, which he wore about his throat. This seemed more in keeping with his bearing than the rough frontier clothes of leather.

The army officer returned the bow with a crisp military salute, though there was nothing crisp or curt in his smile or in his words.

"You are Don Julian Foxen," he said, pleasantly. "I have heard of you from Captain William Goodwin Dana."

"Dana, of Nipomo," returned the rancher, in his deep voice. "Yes; his wife and mine are cousins. You have just come from there, Major Fremont?"

Into the frank eyes of the military leader had come a look of caution. His glance took in the group which had formed behind Foxen: A dark-eyed woman, still good-looking and graceful despite the amplitude of form which years had brought; two young men, sons of the English father and the Spanish mother; other, smaller, children of the union; and several swarthy, sullen-faced people of the country, Californians and Mexican-Californians, house-servants and *vaqueros*.

The bodyguard by the white-oak post returned the hostile looks of the natives steadily, but without affront. Each man had shifted position ever so slightly when their leader had been named by the rancher. Their rifles were ready for instant service.

"Yes, I have just come," replied the soldier-adventurer. "Shall we speak alone, Don Julian?"

"Surely, Fremont," agreed Foxen, and they drew apart from the group.

The officer went on when they were quite out of earshot—

"I am encamped on the flats a few miles up the cañon, on your rancho."

Foxen nodded.

"I know the spot. It is high enough, but the creek runs close by, so you have water. There are about fifteen acres of good grazing for your animals on the shelf above the camp." He smiled. "I need not ask whether you have scouts on the low range above that. You are too much of a soldier to neglect such things."

Fremont made a sign of agreement.

"We are well picketed. It is a pleasant place. The early rains have filled the creek and grass is plentiful."

"What is your force, Fremont, and how long do you stay here?"

The eyes of the soldier looked steadily into the steady eyes of the pioneer.

"My force is no secret," said Fremont, at last. "It is not large, but it is sufficient—a few hundred white men and Walla Walla Indians. They are well armed. We have artillery. We have plenty of fresh horses, thanks to the kindness of Captain Dana. Though we haven't so many today as we had night before last."

An appreciative, humorous smile lighted his face as he went on:

"Dana's brown-faced rascals crept in among them and stampeded the animals in the darkness. It seems that my men had rounded up the favorite saddlers of the captain's wife and daughter with the others, and the Californians scattered horses all over the hills in order to get them back. There was no fighting; but we spent the rest of the night getting the herd together again."

The smile faded and the frank face took on a look of sternness.

"How long I stay and how much I say depends on yourself, Don Julian. I was told by Captain Dana that you would be friendly. I want it from your own lips. Which are you, sir—ally or enemy?"

"A fair question," replied Foxen, stooping to pluck a long spear of fresh grass, on which he chewed thoughtfully. "This is war, I suppose; war between America and Mexico, and there are few neutrals. People are either for you or against you.

"Well, Fremont, look you: I am an Englishman by birth and a seafaring man all my life. I know something of wars and fighting. I've dealt with many an enemy and many a rascal in my day, before I cast anchor in this snug harbor.

"This land, three leagues of it, nearly nine thousand acres—" he waved his arm to encompass the smiling hillsides, the fertile flats along the winding creek, and the mountains whose rusty brown was turning under the revivifying fingers of the Winter rains to dark green— "was given me by grant by the Mexican Government. My wife is an Osuna. She is of the Counts of Osuna, who are mentioned by that writing-fellow in his book about the Alhambra. I am a citizen of Mexico by adoption, and my children are native-born Californians.

"But I am not asleep, Fremont, and I am not a fool. I tell the chattering women, though I cannot understand their outlandish talk, that there ought to be an Eleventh Commandment, 'Mind your own business.' The Spanish people and the Mexican people are good friends and good neighbors. They like the feasting, the dance, the music. They treat me as one of them.

"Still, they have not minded their business. They have let the wheel of government slip from their fingers. This good ship California is rolling in the trough for want of smart, honest officers to steer it. Mexico City sends only the thieves and the politicians to commmand us.

"The land is rich, Fremont. It will support thousands where there are not tens now. Other countries covet it—Russia, I hear, and England. But it is consort to America, you might say, its course lying with yours.

"So—" he struck the knuckles of his right hand into the palm of his left with a smack of decision— "since Mexico can't hold it, some other nation will take it. I would rather the nation be the States than even Britain.

"John Bull is all right," and a smile of affectionate pride crossed his face as he spoke, "but he's a long way off, overseas. Twenty years ago I'd help him take it. But now, living out here, and seeing you Yankees at biscuit-toss, you might say—why, blast it, I like you! I think I'm more than half Yankee, myself.

"Fremont, I'm your friend, and the friend of that mess of stars and streaks of red and white you call your flag. I'll help you."

"Good, Don Julian," returned the soldier quietly, though his manner showed the depth of his gratification. "You'll lose nothing by this. This is America from now henceforth. It is Mexico no longer. I am planting the Stars and Stripes as I go. And where they are planted, they stay!"

He drew himself up and his eyes flashed. Then he went on in quite an ordinary tone—

"I shall want say fifty of your horses and forty head of cattle."

Again Don Julian's long arm swept the hills and the plains, on which were the red and brown and black dots of many animals grazing—

"Take them."

"I will give you an order for their value on the Government."

"It will never be presented, Fremont," smiled Don Julian. "But tell me: Do you give such orders to the Californians whose stock you requisition?"

"Always. You see, sir, I do not feel that my mission is to conquer; rather, it is to win and to pacify. Many of these people care little for Mexico. They live here, they feel, in an empire of their own. They like and trust America. They are willing to join with us, or they will be willing, if there is not too much to forgive.

"So I avoid fighting when I can. I treat the people fairly. I know how much they value courtesy, and I try to be courteous. I turn the prisoners loose, unless they have been caught at the slaying of my soldiers. Why the other day, because Captain Dana asked it, I freed Saloman Pico.

"A good fellow, Dana. There's a writing-fellow in his family too, Don Julian—young Richard Henry Dana, whose book 'Two Years Before The Mast,' is well thought of in the East these past few years. He tells about your town, Santa Barbara. He stopped there."

"He's William's cousin. The book is well enough, I suppose. For a common sailor the lad did not do so bad," replied the sea-captain, indifferently, secure in his ocean pride of rank. He shrugged humorously. "Saloman Pico, that rascally bandit, Fremont, if you can make a good American and an honest citizen out of him, you can work miracles.

"But those orders, now, for the stock: Will the Government honor them?"

Fremont's face changed. It showed sadness and worriment. Don Julian did not know until later what the change meant—how the gallant Fremont, who had made the first move to win California, and who was cutting the Mexican resistance in two as much by his tact and kindliness as by his ability as a soldier, was subjected to fire in the rear as well as in front; how Washington criticised, balked, fettered and distrusted him, withholding genuine support of his campaign; how rival leaders and jealous persons sought to undermine and discredit him.

"I hope they will be honored; I trust so," he said, in a low voice, as he turned away.

Again there was an exchange of salutes. Fremont bowed over the hand of Dona Eduarda Osuna Foxen, spoke jovially to the children, and swung into the saddle. As he headed back to camp, the Indians galloped out on either side, and the cowboy rode well in front, to prevent an ambush.

When the bodyguard gathered at the entrance to the flat from which rose the smoke of many camp-fires, the Indians made their report. They spoke by grunts and sign-language. The information which they gave was corroborated by the nods of the cowboy: Enemy sentinels were on the two highest peaks, overlooking not only the camp, but the cañon itself for a long distance in both directions.

THE stay in Foxen Cañon was prolonged. Fremont's men were weary with much hard marching, and the food supplies were low. They ranged the hills, killing cattle and jerking the beef; that is, cutting it into thin strips and drying it in the sun. The hides they kept, for there were shoes and rifle scabbards and harness to make and repair; bullet and tobacco-pouches to fashion and gun-rammers to feather; and whole hides made fine water-panniers. The cowboys also stitched themselves new chaps, evenings, the hair side of the cow-hide out, to protect their legs as they rode through the thorny chaparral.

These plainsmen were of the busiest, for it was their duty to ride down and rope the half-wild Foxen horses and gentle them for the saddle and the artillery-harness. During the time that the little army worked and rested on the flats, its commander was a frequent visitor at the Foxen *rancheria*. He was drawn instinctively toward Don Julian. He liked the pioneer for his honest, simple and courageous nature; and, sailor that he was, Foxen could spin a yarn with the best of them.

"I am Don Julian," he said one day, his eyes twinkling. "Don Julian. That's what they call me in all this country roundabout, and it is not my name at all! For I was christened Benjamin back in Norwich, England, in my birth-year, 1801. And when I married Eduarda in the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, they gave me the church baptismal name of William Domingo Foxen.

"But just about the time the *padres* were making fast that anchor inside the church, the Californians, outside, were holding a sort of ship's meeting, and they settled on Don Julian. So you see, Fremont, I have three names to choose from."

The soldier listened absorbedly to tales of treasure-hunting and black-birding and the daily vicissitudes of salt-water navigating by this sea-captain come ashore. With no less interest did he hear of pioneering in this smiling wilderness.

"Why, a dozen years ago, when we built the house," said Don Julian, "the bears were so thick we couldn't sleep in it till the doors and windows were placed and barred. A bear is not a comfortable bunk-mate. So we slept, my Californians and I, on a platform across the roof.

"There are bears left, yes; but not so many. One day I saw two grizzlies, full-grown, rolling and playing out on the hillside above your camp like puppies. I had a good horse under me. I steered a roundabout course to come up to leeward. And then, when I was as near as I could get, I clapped on all sail."

"You mean you fought two full-grown grizzlies?" demanded Fremont, incredulously.

"Why not?" retorted Don Julian, thumping his barrel of a chest. "I'm as big as any grizzly! Well, one I shot and the other I roped. I dragged him to the house at the heels of my horse. If he'd ever gotten to his feet—but the horse took care of that. Fremont, you should see that horse run! And I was lucky that the line held.

"Here, I snubbed him to that oak post till we got around to tend to him."

"So that's what the post is for," mused the soldier, surveying the great, upright beam.

"For that, and bad horses, and wild steers, and, well, it might be a good thing to tie bad men to till they cooled."

The life of the countryside went on around the flat on which Fremont's army was camped—went on in a deep and swift and treacherous current that threatened to engulf the little band. Swarthy-faced riders left the Foxen corrals before dawn, and came slipping and sliding down dim mountain paths on their sure-footed horses long after dark at night. There were meetings in secluded cañons. Files of men rode south from San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande, and north from Santa Barbara—

men with high-peaked sombreros and silver-mounted saddles; men with long pistols at their hips, and long rifles over pommels and keen-edged daggers in their gaudy sashes.

There were watch-fires in the high defiles and camp-fires in the valleys. Always far-seeing youths, arms folded on black-muzzled guns, peered from those two great hills on Fremont's camp.

Don Julian Foxen lived a life as open as the day. Fellow-ranchers, English, Irish, or Scotch adventurers like himself, who had married Spanish girls, stopped on their leisurely overland tours to spend a day with him. The six-horse stages, from San Francisco and Sacramento to Los Angeles and San Diego and back, rattled and clanked up to the white-oak post for a brief pause to change horses, for Foxen's was a stage-station.

The *padres* from the neighboring missions, Santa Ynes and La Purissima, and from others further away, called, too. Don Julian ground out wheat and bran for them in his mill at the *rancheria*. He jerked beef for their stores and made their soap from lye and tallow. The lye he got by burning the matural, a brush found across the mountains in the Tulares.

Horse-buyers came to chaffer, because Foxen's Canadian stud was famous, and the strong and clear-stepping animals from his ranch hauled the street-cars in San Francisco. Foxen knew and loved horses as he knew and loved ships. The craft esteemed him highly, for once, on a wager, he had beaten the stage from Santa Barbara to the ranch, though the driver had three changes for fresh animals, and Foxen drove his own pair straight through.

Spanish dons and high-class Mexicans on business, open or secret, for their harried government also appeared at Foxen's. To them, as to all the others, Don Julian was attentive and cordial. They ate and they slept beneath his roof, for in those days hospitality was as ready and unthinking as the inviting tinkle of the brook.

The dark-faced might say, true, that Don Julian was friendly with the *Gringo capitan;* but there was always a Californian to remind such speaker, passionately, that he was friendly with their own people as well. And was he not married to one of them, a pure-bred Castilian—no? But yes! And he never went near the camp in the cañon; they knew that.

So judgment was suspended on Don Julian. He avoided rousing enmities when he could. He had his convictions, but he did not flaunt them. He did not swerve from his placid course foolhardily toward Fremont and the Americans, or cravenly toward the Government of Mexico City and its minions.

He knew things. His dark-eyed wife whispered them to him in their chamber at night, for the Californians told her their plans. Don Julian could understand no Spanish, he would assert, quite honestly; and his wife knew no English. And yet, somehow, that which she had learned was conveyed to him.

Fremont, good soldier that he was, sensed his danger. He did not stir from camp without his picked bodyguard. At the Foxen *rancheria* these stalwarts grouped themselves by the white-oak shaft, quiet and inoffensive, but always watchful. They did not mix with the Californians, who passed them widely and with venomous glances. Their chief, with his pleasant smile and ready salute, spoke to every one he met regardless of the black looks that were often returned.

The eighth day. The stock of jerked beef had mounted satisfactorily. The old horses were no longer to be told from the newly requisitioned by their projecting ribs. Rifles shone. The wheelwrights and blacksmiths had been busy, and the field-piece carriages had been rebuilt. The wagons were sturdily patched.

The men themselves had filled out. Belts were not drawn so tightly; bellies were no longer so lean. The lines in bold faces were not so deep. There were races and leaps and other tests of strength and skill. The expedition's wrestling champion was made—and unmade. The camp resounded with boisterous laughter. Fisticuffs were frequent. Beaver Two-Tales, one of the Walla Walla braves, won many trinkets by his skill in hurling a scalping-knife at a mark. In short, Fremont's army was rested and ready.

There was no firing of rifles. Target shooting was tabu. Fremont did not wish to alarm the Californians by warlike sounds. Besides, ammunition was not to be wasted, though the store was large. Anyway, when he was recruiting in the north, only sure riflemen were accepted for his force. And until they marched southward there had been daily practice.

ON A bright morning after a night of rain Fremont paid his usual visit to the Foxen *rancheria*. Foxen saw the stage on its way to the south and then sauntered toward the thick-walled adobe corral farthest from the house. He lifted his right shoulder in a lazy way as he went, and the soldier took the hint. In a few minutes they were squatting, cowboy-fashion, opposite the open gate. They could see within and without. No gliding, dark-skinned eavesdropper could surprize them.

"You go soon, Fremont?"

"Soon, Don Julian."

"And by which road?"

The soldier looked at him in surprize.

"There is but one—Gaviota Pass."

Don Julian nodded.

"Gaviota, 'The Pass Of The Gulls.' Do you know anything about it, Fremont?"

"Very little. But you can tell me, of course."

The rancher whittled a live-oak branch to a point with his sheath-knife and drew roughly a plan on the hard, bare earth.

"Look you," he said, "the way is through this valley of the Santa Ynes, into which my cañon opens a half-day's march to the south. You cross the valley; the course is plain. Then come the mountains, miles of them. The road is not bad. But it will take two long days, from dark to dark, before you sight the Pacific beyond Gaviota."

Fremont rubbed his chin ruminatively, and yet with sober good cheer.

"Two days, and the road is open to Santa Barbara!"

"It is open when you reach the Pacific," agreed the tall Englishman, drily. "But if our friends the Californians have their way you will never reach it, nor one of your men."

"What do you mean, Don Julian?"

The bit of oak was busy again.

"Here, all but through the pass, where the creek winds beside the trail, the walls are high and straight. There is a defile for more than a rifle shot where two horses cannot travel abreast. It is worst by the Indian's Face, here, for the road turns sharply. You could make no speed."

"The Indian's Face?" interrupted the soldier.

"Yes. The great profile of a chief which the Lord has chiseled in the rock. It sticks out over you like a ship's figurehead. Well, Fremont, the tops of the cliffs hemming you in are covered with loose rocks. They are from the size of your head to the displacement of a fair-sized bark. There is where the Californians are waiting for you.

"Those from the north have been hovering on your flanks, as you know, since you came into this country. Messengers have brought every man who can ride and shoot from Santa Barbara. They line the Pass of the Gulls for a mile. Trains of powder will be laid to the biggest rocks. When your army is inside the defile, the powder will be lighted above and below, blocking it with the rocks that will rain down.

"And there you are, trapped. They will kill you all by rocks or rifle fire. You can not escape if you enter the pass, for when you leave your camp the scouts on those mountains will cut across ahead of you on fast horses to give the word. They will beat you to Gaviota by hours—by a day."

"How do you know all this, Don Julian?"

The Englishman shrugged his broad shoulders.

"They are like children in many ways," he explained. "They talk it in the corners, and my boys catch a word here and there. The women tell my wife. Why, I could write the log of it for you."

Fremont's tanned and ruddy face did not pale, but his eyes narrowed thoughtfully and his jaws set.

"There is no way around Gaviota?" he asked at last, while Don Julian with his broad palm painstakingly smoothed out every vestige of the map.

"No way, Fremont."

Again the soldier was silent, while two marks graved themselves deeply between his eyebrows. He rose and paced back and forth, then squatted again by Don Julian.

"My Indians," he began; "they could climb those look-out hills and take the sentinels. There would be no one to carry the word to Gaviota ——"

Don Julian shook his head.

"The Californians are not such fools. They have scouts at the mouth of the pass a long ways from the Indian's Face who, afoot on paths that even I do not know, still would take the word as you crossed the Valley of the Santa Ynes. No, Fremont;

the Pass of the Gulls is closed to you."

The soldier's voice trembled with emotion when he spoke.

"Don Julian, I may not turn back. I must go on. I cannot tell you how much it means if I should fail. There must be another way to the south. If I can get to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, Mexico's grip is broken on all of California. I know it! There must be a way, I tell you!"

Don Julian rose leisurely and stretched his ponderous frame as he smiled.

"There is another way, Fremont. I did not say there wasn't. Look you ——"

And he spoke rapidly for five minutes. When he had finished, Fremont's eyes were sparkling with jubilation and resolve.

FOR three more days straggling Californians from the north and the south rode into Gaviota. There they found hundreds of their kind, idling and feasting, so that it was like the wedding of a very rich man. The pass was lined with their camp-fires. They had unrolled their blankets in the caves along the stream, or fashioned rain-shelters from branches on the cliff-tops.

The supports under the great rocks on the barriers had been loosened. Many other stones, each large enough to account for a man and a horse, had been carried to the lip of the perpendicular walls, so that a shove would send them winging down on the heads of Fremont's men.

They visited from camp to camp. There was music. The Californian did not dream of going to war without his stringed instruments, and many of the young men could sing. There was gambling and story-telling. At night their fires painted the grim cliffs with gold and crimson unafraid, for surprize by Fremont was impossible.

A rancher of the Santa Ynes valley named Janssens was in command of them. He was popular and witty and a ready talker. They had great sport as he described the spoils of the gringo massacre, and how these spoils would be divided. To the more influential he promised each a soldier's coat; to the others a pair of breeches or boots. Every man should have a good army rifle and plenty of ammunition; and there would be one of Fremont's field-pieces in the plaza of each Middle California *pueblo*.

Three day's after Fremont's talk with Don Julian the expedition struck camp and headed south through Foxen Cañon. It was the eleventh since their coming. The time was late December, 1846. Dreary, drizzling rain was falling; the clouds hung low on the mountains. When the head of the column reached the Foxen *rancheria*, there was a halt while good-byes were said. Fremont and Don Julian shook hands ceremoniously. Fremont said graceful, kindly words so that all might hear.

They were so busy, perhaps, that they did not see nor heed the two swart-faced, well-mounted youths who swung round the column from behind, to disappear at a gallop in the mist and mud ahead. They were the sentinels from the twin peaks overlooking Fremont's camp, hastening to Gaviota with the word that the gringoes were coming.

The column took up its march again. The trail wound over the smooth, park-like hillsides on which the noble live-oaks and the lighter-foliaged white-oaks grew. It debouched from the cañon's mouth at noon into the Valley of the Santa Ynes. And during the brief halt Don Julian and his eighteen-year-old-son, William, cantered up to present themselves, smiling, to Fremont. They had slipped away unnoticed from the rancho. A ragged cheer from the drenched and mud-stained line greeted them, for the soldiers knew that something unusual was afoot, and that the pioneer had a part in it.

The Valley of the Santa Ynez, lay broad, level, and fertile. Their course was straight ahead, for Gaviota was a notch in the mountain wall to the south. But there were excited and gleeful undertoned comments when the column turned abruptly to the left, toward the east, and plodded across the plains.

They camped that night against the foot of the eastern mountains. Despite the rain, every one was in high spirits. Fragmentary knowledge of the danger of ambush had trickled through the column. Now, as they sat around the hissing camp-fires they discussed the change of plans which was to outwit the Californians.

Don Julian was to guide them over San Marcos Pass, a short cut to Santa Barbara. There was no road, only a trail which was wild, steep and dangerous for a man on foot and highly perilous for a horseman.

No wagon had ever compassed it. But it could be done, they knew; they had confidence in Foxen and in themsleves.

The next day was Christmas—a cheerless feast-day. Rain still fell heavily. They rose long before dawn, and were on the move with the first graying of the crowded skies. The stern fight to conquer the pass began. Don Julian and William went ahead with Fremont to spy out the route. When they returned to the column axes were set to swinging, as brush and trees were cut away for the passage of the wagons and guns.

It was terrifically hard work. Hundreds of tons of rocks were rolled into minor chasms so that the outer wheel might find grudged footing. The horses slipped and strained under the heavy load, and men threw down axes and levers to tug on long ropes.

One wedge-shaped bite out of the rock could not be filled and so they rigged tackle and swung the impedimenta across, while the horses scrambled around it like cats. Men gasped with fatigue as they toiled, the sweat blinding them. The Indians had much the best of it. They had no clothing, heavy with rain, to weight them down.

There were mishaps. A field-piece which was being dragged over by man-power slipped sidewise into a chasm. Fortunately its nose came to rest against a jutting ledge below until they could whip a rope about a smooth stone pillar. But one man lost the upper joints of his fingers, ground off between rope and rock as the loop tightened. It took an hour to get the cannon back up again.

A little later a horse, fortunately riderless, was betrayed by the shale which water had undermined. He went over the side to the cañon floor below hundreds of feet, with a scream that made even these hardened adventurers shudder.

Don Julian was a company in himself. He seemed to be a born engineer, for he found instinctively the best and easiest grades. His knowledge of handling sail and stowing cargo worked to their benefit as he rigged slings and anchored the hoisting tackle. His low, heartening word to the horses, straining, with nostrils distended, seemed to develop new power within them which they did not know they had possessed.

As the day passed the trail became even more steep and difficult. This merely served to set the men's courage harder, for they knew they were nearing the top. It was a race whether they should reach the summit before darkness made further work impossible.

They grew reckless in their haste. One of the soldiers was not too careful where he placed his feet as he wrestled with a wagon-wheel, and his fall of twenty-five feet among jagged rocks that mangled while they saved, resulted in a broken leg. After that the work somehow grew easier, as if he had been a needed scarifice. When darkness placed its hand upon them, they made camp on the broad space which marks the top of San Marcos.

Their greatest difficulties were now over. The other side of the pass, overlooking the long-necked valley in which Santa Barbara nestles by the sea, was friendly. There was little tugging to do, only holding back, since the way was all down-hill. And the trail was better. There was less pioneering to be done upon it.

This Don Julian explained as he set the leg of the injured soldier in rough but efficient fashion. As a sea-captain he had a fair knowledge of medicine and surgery, gained by caring for his men out on deep water, far from apothecaries and hospitals.

"It is an easy drop down into Goleta Valley," he explained. "You do not need me any longer, Fremont. My son, William, will serve you well. If this hurt man is to live he must have rest and care. I will take him back to the rancho and my wife will nurse him."

"That is kind, Don Julian," returned Fremont, busy with his papers by candle-light, as the rain drummed on the roof of his tent. "Without you, we would not be here tonight."

"Time your march to reach Santa Barbara Sunday morning," went on Don Julian, ignoring the praise. "Divide your forces, sending part of them to the church of the Presidio, down in the town and the rest to the Old Mission. It sits a little apart, above the village to the north. You will see its towers as you march in.

"Every one will be at mass, so there will be no fighting. When they come out and find your field-guns planted in the plaza, and the flag floating, they will know it is no use. Talk to them, Fremont; you have a clever tongue, and you will make friends of them."

Fremont looked doubtful.

"Are you sure it is wise to divide my men, Don Julian? There are none too many, at the best."

"Of course, divide them," was the brusque response. "You could do with a handful. Remember—" and he chuckled—"all the able-bodied men are up in Gaviota Pass, waiting for you to come through. The others will give in quick enough. Why, I alone drove their best fighters like fisher-boats before a squall, not so long ago."

"How was that?"

Don Julian laughed at the remembrance.

"Young blood is hot, Fremont, and it talks loud. We have been expecting you for months to come cruising down the coast, and the boys of the upper-class families liked to boast of what they would do to the gringoes if they dared show their noses in Santa Barbara. They did not change their tune when I was about, either. I think they clapped on a bit more sail.

"At last I said to them: '*Amigos*, you are not so brave. One poor gringo alone could frighten you half to death.' Of course they laughed and told me to do my worst. So one night when they had a dance at the de la Guerra house, which is the heart of everything in Santa Barbara, I drove a herd of cattle into the plaza in front and yelled like——.

"The clashing of horns and the rumbling of hoofs sent the brave boys hopping out of windows like rabbits. The music stopped short and the fiddlers ran with the rest. I sat on my horse and laughed at them all. They've sung low about cowardly gringoes since."

Fremont laughed, too.

"A good start," he said. "I hope we shall do as well, and with no more bloodshed."

Then he rose, and when he spoke again it was with the clipped formality of the soldier:

"William Domingo Foxen, I express to you my sincere appreciation and gratitude for your aid to myself and my Government in our difficulties. No citizen of our country could have been more helpful and loyal." He extended a packet of papers. "Here I have set down a full report of your conduct, to get for you official recognition. There is also an order for reimbursement for the cattle and horses I took.

"If you are ever in need, sir, do not hesitate to present those papers at Washington You will find my country—no, Foxen, our country!—not ungrateful."

They clasped hands. Foxen took the packet, bowed ceremoniously and left the tent. Before the full light next morning he had started down the pass, bound for his rancho, the injured soldier on a *travois* behind his horse. At about the same time Fremont and his men, guided by young William Foxen, rattled over the slippery trail toward Santa Barbara.

DON JULIAN was a true prophet. Caught unawares and defenseless because of the absence of the men, Santa Barbara surrendered at discretion. When the women and the children and the grandfathers streamed out of the two churches, they found cannon staring them starkly in the face, while the steep, narrow streets were patrolled by watchful soldiers and Indians on horseback. The Stars and Stripes floated above Fremont's headquarters in a grove opposite the center of town.

Nor was there trouble when the men, their feathers drooping, slipped shamefacedly into town. The Californians loved a joke and feared ridicule. The warriors who had expected to return wearing the soldiers' coats as badges of victory, were greeted with guffaws which reduced them to perspiring, though fruitless, explanation. Fremont's coup had made him a hero.

After a few days' rest, the soldier-adventurer pushed on to the south. History tells how successful he was, and how his boldness and martial ability and tact completed, with astonishingly few casualties, the conquest of California.

But it did not fare so well with Don Julian. In fact, it seemed that his unselfish aid of Fremont resulted in calamity. Almost from that Christmas Day in 1846 did his fortunes decline. Back at the *rancheria* with Fremont's disabled soldier he found himself surrounded by an atmosphere of hatred and distrust.

The Californians knew how they had been tricked, and they planned and dreamed revenge. The old race prejudice against the gringo rushed back with greater force. Don Julian had married one of them and lived among them as a true son of California. But when it had come to the moment of decision blood had called to blood. He had turned his back upon them to cleave to the fair-skinned invaders. This they could not forgive.

Many a night Don Julian and his sons and a few faithful servants sat on guard at the *rancheria*, their rifles across their knees. And the precaution was necessary, for there were shots in the dark, the rolling clatter of horses' hoofs, and the hurling of firebrands at the bamboo-thatched roofs.

There came a swift and sudden raid of the *Indios gentiles*, the wild Indians of the Tulares, who swept across the mountains from the interior and ran off many head of stock. The thrust was followed by others until Don Julian's herds were but a skeleton of their former strength. He believed these raids were encouraged by the Californians. The Indians escaped each time with their prize as they had never escaped in the past. The California-born ranchers would not now come forward to join the pursuing posse.

The glow of open opposition faded with the months, but the embers of hatred smouldered. Don Julian, with the training of the sea behind him, loved a change of scene. When he felt there was no longer reason for fear, he took his family to Santa Barbara for a sojourn. Fremont's soldier, made well by their ministrations, went south with them to join his commander.

On Foxen's return a few weeks later it was to find the ranch-house and most of the other buildings in ruins. An incendiary fire had destroyed Foxen's home and the papers which Fremont had given him.

The pioneer began to feel the pinch. He had little money when the *rancheria* was rebuilt. He had put into force the custom of giving, on marriage, one-ninth of his estate to each of his nine children. So shrank his domain.

One of his daughters, Mrs. Cooper, went to Fremont in Los Angeles years later and implored the latter's aid for her father. She told how the papers acknowledging the Government's indebtedness had been burned in the destruction of the *rancheria*. The soldier listened to her attentively and answered her cordially:

"Certainly I remember your father very well and gratefully acknowledge what he did. Employ a lawyer to make out your claim and have it certified by witnesses. With my help Don Julian will be paid for what he did."

The claim was prepared, but Don Julian's ill-luck dogged him. Fremont went back east an old man, and ill. He died before the Foxen claim could be presented. When, later, it was prosecuted before the Government, the decision was handed down that it was, "paid in full." Yet Foxen, nor any of his family, never received a dollar.

Outside of Santa Barbara county Don Julian has never been given credit for what he did. His feat is unknown. In Fremont's own book describing the campaign he evidently grew weary of writing before he reached the incidents here set down. He dimissed Santa Barbara with a paragraph, omitting all mention of the frustrated ambush and Don Julian Foxen.

The Foxen rancho has passed into other hands. The second adobe house, built on the ruins of the first, was also destroyed by fire, and the third, erected on the same site, is but a formless mound of yellow clay beneath a patch of tall weeds. The white-oak pillar to which unruly horses and steers and grizzlies were fastened has been removed and is in a California museum. Don Julian has long since been gathered to his fathers.

The pioneer yet lives in the hearts of his children and his children's children and the few neighbors who knew him in the long ago and still survive. There is, for instance, John Goodchild of Sisquoc, himself an Englishman and pioneer, who loves to talk of the sturdy sea-captain.

"I was a young man when I came to this country more than fifty years ago," said Goodchild, looking dreamily from his veranda off across the prairies to the palisades of the Santa Maria and the blue mountains beyond, "and Don Julian was old. But I admired and respected him and he became my friend.

"He did more to save the Pacific Coast states to the Union than any one save and except Fremont himself. For when Fremont was marching southward England was dickering with the Mexican governor of the province of California at Monterey. She landed two clergymen there from a warship and negotiations between them and the provincial government had gone so far that a formal transfer of authority to Great Britain was seriously discussed.

"Suppose that Foxen had held his peace and Fremont and his men had been trapped and wiped out in Gaviota Pass. The other

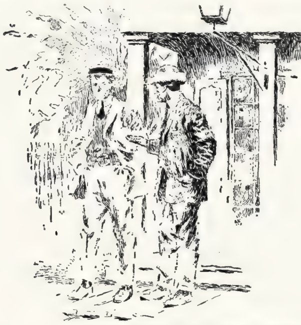
American forces operating in California were feeble and inclined to be timid because they were not united. The Californians, encouraged by the coup, would have fought harder. England would have come out in the open. The Monterey Government would have abdicated. And California would be a British possession today.

"More: When the trains of covered wagons crossed the continent in the late forties, bound for the wonderful farming lands that lay at the end of the Oregon Trail, they would have encountered British authority when they reached California, and British claims ahead of them in the Pacific Northwest."

John Goodchild led the way to the grave of Don Julian Foxen. It is on a wild hilltop, where stands an abandoned white church with broken windows, a few paces from Goodchild's home. It is just above the road where Fremont entered Foxen cañon, and not far from the site of his camp on the rancho.

The churchyard is overgrown with high, barbed grasses and filled with the forgotten graves of pioneers. But Don Julian's in the far corner, with its back to the mountains, is so marked that it dominates the hilltop.

This pathfinder to fame unknown sleeps well, no doubt. For his monument is just what he would have it: A white marble shaft, representing the broken-off mainmast of a ship. He wrought well on land, and saved an empire for America. But, after all, he was a sailor, and his first love was the sea.



The BEST DEFENSE

by John Webb

Author of "According to Hoyle," "The Turn of the Wheel," etc.

FIVE men sat on the veranda of the American Club. It was evening and Port-au-Prince, having simmered all day beneath a broiling sun, was now cooling in the breeze that swept down from the mountains in the east.

Four of the men were grouped about a small table. They were Cordaline, a high-cast "gentleman of color," graduate of the Sorbonne and owner of a local newspaper; Starliene, a Syrian-American who managed the Atlantic Trading Company's sugar-mill in the Cul-de-Sac region; "Blacksnake" Tom Taggert, formerly a Florida convict-boss, now Starliene's able, very able, assistant; Allen Johnson, manager of a smaller rival sugar-mill. The fifth man was Captain McGuire, of the freighter *Hawk*, better known in the Caribbean ports as "One-Two Mac," a silent little man who sat apart, puffing continually at brown-paper cigarets and seeming to pay no attention to the talk of the four men seated at the table.

Starliene, a loud-mouthed braggart, was telling of how the day before he had caught a native woman in the act of stealing meat from the company stores.

"I caught her just as she was leaving the ice-house with it," he was saying. "She had something under her arm wrapped up in leaves, and when I grabbed it away I found it was a fine big steak. She said she was stealing it for her man, who, according to her, was sick and couldn't work.

" 'Oh, that's all right,' I says to her. 'Wait until I come back and I'll give you something to go with it.'

"The poor fool—she was so surprized she looked up at me with eyes like a sick cow.

" 'Just wait,' I tells her, and I went into the house.

"When I came out I had Tom's whip, holding it behind my back.

" 'Here you are,' I says. 'Take this along with the steak,' and I swung the old 'snake smack across her shoulders. Cut the shirt off her like a knife, it did.

"She was so surprized for a moment she couldn't move; then she lit off down the road like a scared rabbit, and me behind her, giving her a cut with the whip at every hop. Ho, ho—you should have seen that wench run.

"She runs straight to her shack, and there's her lazy brute of a man huddled up in bed. He thinks he's sick, but after I smacked him a couple of times with the whip he hops out of bed and runs off down the road about three jumps ahead of his woman.

"Ho, ho—you'd have laughed to see them jump every time I cut them with the 'snake. If I'd had a horse I would have chased them all the way to Ennery. The woman held on to the steak though.

"I suppose they're out in the bush yet. If you could have seen the expression on her face when I gave her something to go with it! I'll never forget it—ho, ho!"

Cordaline, the mulatto, to show his contempt for the full-blooded of his race, laughed softly. Although in his heart he hated both whites and blacks his dread of being classed with the latter caused him to show a contemptuous indifference toward their sufferings.

"It was a most appropriate punishment, my friend," said Cordaline, a honeyed, flattering inflection to his voice. "And a good joke beside."

Taggert, a tall, sun-tanned man with hard eyes and a cruel mouth, smiled a lean, tiger-like smile, a mere parting and drawing-out of his lips while his eyes remained hard and mirthless. He was a professional slave-driver, an old hand, proud of his ability and not likely to applaud the work of a mere beginner—even though the beginner be his boss.

Allen Johnson gazed moodily at the floor and said nothing. He was a melancholy, quiet sort of a man with the eyes of a dreamer.

The morose little sea captain sitting apart stared unseeingly into the night.

"And what do you think, friend Johnson?" asked Starliene pointedly. "Was it not a good joke on the wench?"

"It was a contemptible, cowardly joke," said Johnson evenly. "And I think you are about the lowest human being between Cape Hatien and the Mona Passage!"

Starliene promptly reached across the table and knocked Johnson out of his chair, then stood up and waited, grinning. He was a big man, a head taller than Johnson and much heavier, and a more experienced fighter; at one time in the States he had been well known as an amateur heavyweight boxer. Johnson came at him fiercely, but Starliene had no trouble in sending him again and again to the floor.

Fighting was abhorrent to Cordaline, and he shuddered and murmured weak protests; but Taggert, smiling his lean, mirthless smile, nodded approvingly at each telling blow. One-Two Mac glanced casually at the fighting men, then resumed his study of the distant mountain-tops.

The fight was a short one. Johnson, breathless, bleeding, completely exhausted, staggered to his feet and stood swaying helplessly, too weak to lift his hands.

"Got enough?" asked Starliene, grinning broadly. "What do you think about me now?"

"I think the same as I did before," said Johnson stubbornly, thickly because of his bruised and swollen lips. "I got mine now, but yours is coming—you big, yellow greaser!"

Starliene laughed long and loudly. He was enjoying the situation immensely.

"Run along back to your sugar-mill and coddle your niggers," he said contemptuously, and he laughed again and turned away.

His lips tight together, his eyes blazing with a wild, reckless light, Johnson plunged down the steps to the street and strode off. Captain McGuire arose leisurely, yawned slightly and passed the others on his way to the steps. He was a black-haired, black-eyed, middle-aged man with a somber, thoughtful cast of countenance. He was of average height; but his body, slender and graceful as a boy's, made him look smaller than he was. He was so graceful of carriage that the casual observer was likely not to notice the spreading shoulders and long, heavy, loose-swinging arms. His stride was short and quick, almost mincing, and he appeared and acted anything but the bucko shipmaster he was.

As Captain McGuire passed, Taggert studied him from between narrowed eyelids. He had the vanity of a born bully, and it galled him to know that the captain's reputation as a fighting man overshadowed his own.

"What do you think of it, capt'n?" called Taggert when the captain had reached the sidewalk.

The little man turned and looked up at him.

"I don't know," he said doubtfully, shaking his head. "Johnson says Starliene's a coward and Starliene says he isn't. It's a toss-up, I guess."

He turned and walked rapidly in the direction Johnson had taken.

Taggert growled curses deep in his throat.

"You're another one who's got something comin', Mr. One-Two Mac," he said.

JOHNSON, three blocks from the club, was walking with great, angry strides when he felt a light touch upon his shoulder. He turned, to confront the unobtrusive stranger who had sat so quietly on the club veranda.

"Where are you going?" the stranger asked.

"Don't butt in," growled Johnson, turning away.

"I have a habit of doing that," said the quiet one. "I know you, but I don't believe you know me. I'm McGuire, master of that little tin can you see down in the harbor, the *Hawk*."

"McGuire!"

Johnson started in surprize.

"Are you Captain One-Two Mac!"

"They call me that," said the captain nodding pleasantly.

"Why——"

Johnson looked the other up and down with eyes that were frankly doubting.

"I know—I'm not big enough or tough enough or ugly enough; but I'm One-Two Mac all the same. But you haven't told me where you are going."

Johnson straightened; and his anger, temporarily side-tracked by his surprize, returned to him.

"I'm going to get a gun," he said tensely between clenched teeth, "and then I'm going to find that dirty, yellow hound and blow his head off!"

"That's no good," said the captain calmly as if he were discussing a simple problem in navigation. "You'd find no satisfaction in gloating over a dead man. This military law we have in Haiti now is kind of hard to buck, too," he added thoughtfully.

"Well, he's not going to get away with it," stormed Johnson, and he turned to go on.

"Wait a minute."

Captain McGuire caught him by the coat and held him.

"I know a better way than blowing his head off."

"What is it?" asked Johnson eagerly.

"Knock it off."

"No, I'm afraid I can't."

Johnson shook his head despairingly.

"You saw what he just did to me. He's bigger than I am, and he knows the game."

"No, he doesn't. He just happens to know more than you do. What's wrong between you two anyway?"

"He's a dirty, yellow ——"

"Besides that."

"He's a nickel-nursing thief. We're mill-managers for competing sugar companies, you know. He feeds his help one handful of rice a day and pays them one *gourd;* I give mine three square meals and one *gourd,* fifty *cob.* Thirty cents a day! That's not too much to pay a laboring-man, is it?

"His niggers work an hour more a day than mine. Our shacks are clean; his are running over with vermin. I never beat my niggers—if they won't work I fire 'em; Blacksnake Tom is swinging his whip all day for Starliene.

"You can imagine what the result is. All the natives come to me for work. Starliene can't get help—his output falls off—he loses his bonus for production. It's his own fault—his company will pay reasonable wages; they want results.

"I think Starliene and Taggert are keeping a false book, and everything would go fine for them if it wasn't for me cutting down their labor. If he could get me out of the way the natives would have to work under the starvation terms he'd make for them. He's tried for months to freeze me out—or to make me employ my help on the same terms he employs his; but tonight he went further than he ever did before.

"It was a trick—he knew what answer I'd make when he asked me what I thought of his —— contemptible 'joke.' And the worst of it is, it's true—he did beat that poor, miserable woman. My house-boy told me about it.

"And Starliene said she hung on to the steak! Of course she did; these people are on the verge of starvation from the time they are born until they die. You can beat one of them to death any time if you give him a bit of grub to chew on while you're doing it. Hung on to the steak—I guess she did!

"—— me—I wish I'd never seen Haiti! I can't stand by and watch a couple of heartless hounds wring the life-blood out of a lot of poor, unfortunate wretches who haven't brains enough to help themselves or spunk enough to fight back. I'd be doing a service to humanity if I wiped out the pair of them."

There was a wild, fanatical light in Johnson's eyes that Captain McGuire did not like. The tropics do strange things to the mind of a man who falls into the habit of brooding, whether over real or imaginary wrongs; and the wrongs which had presented themselves to Johnson were far from imaginary ones, as Captain Mac knew. One-Two Mac was a veritable stormy petrel, nosing into turbulent waters which more cautious men fought shy of, or even avoided speaking of, and Johnson had told him little that he had not already known or suspected.

"I know a better way than that," he said. "Suppose you could have Starliene so afraid of you that he'd run every time he saw you? I mean afraid of *you*—not of a gun or a knife, but of *you*."

"Not much chance of that, Captain Mac. I'd make it mighty hot for him if I could bring it about, but I'm afraid there's no chance. Even if I could lick Starliene, there's Blacksnake Tom Taggert—he's always standing by to take a hand, and he's a better man than Starliene. Taggert is a cold-blooded fiend. He has killed at least two natives, that I know of, with that —— whip of his."

"Never mind Taggert," said Captain Mac. "He'll be taken care of. If you've got the stuff in you I can tell you how to lick Starliene—and that's all you need concern yourself about. Give my plan a month's trial, and if it doesn't work you can try the gun method. It will take spunk though."

"Shoot. I'm listening."

"Well, here it is: Every time you see Starliene go for him. Hit him hard, stand up to him as long as you can, and when you can't stand up any longer—go down fighting. He'll soon get sick of that, and then you'll have him on the run."

Johnson, the momentary hope gone from his eyes, shook his head doubtfully.

"Don't shake your head," said Captain Mac. "You don't know anything about it. I've been fighting for forty-five years—and I'm just that old—and I can size up a man while you'd be trying to count how many hands and feet he had. And I've sized up Starliene. I have the name of being sparing with words, and it goes against the grain for me to stand here gabbing with you. Will you try my plan?"

"I will," said Johnson with sudden decision.

"Good enough. Each time you start try to stay with him a little longer than the time before. I'm sailing for New York tomorrow, but I will be back inside of a month; see if you can't run your staying-time up to, say, twenty-five minutes by the time I get back. If you can, I promise you—he's yours! It will be tough going for a while, but— Good night, Allen Johnson."

"Good night, Captain Mac."

The strange little fighting man turned on his heel and with his quick, nervous strides went off in the direction of the docks. Allen Johnson stared after him until he disappeared in the dismal gloom of night-time Port-au-Prince. He felt somehow that he had made the acquaintance of a man worth knowing.

THREE days later Johnson had his first opportunity to begin the campaign outlined by One-Two Mac. Starliene, with Taggert, was returning from Mirebalais, and he drew his horse to a halt at Johnson's to survey insolently the activities about the camp. They had not been there a minute when Johnson, his diminutive Jamaican house-boy at his heels, came toward them from the mill. He walked straight to Starliene.

"Come down off that horse and get licked," he said in a voice in which there was just a suggestion of a quiver.

"What!" exclaimed the big man in amazement.

"You heard what I said. Come down and get licked."

Starliene stared at him wonderingly, looked questioningly at Taggert, then broke into his loud, grating laugh.

Taggert's face was as stony and expressionless as ever, but there was a queer, half-puzzled light in his pale blue eyes. He studied Johnson with calm but unwavering intentness.

Starliene cut his laugh in the middle and curled his lips in a sneer.

"Run along," he snarled.

Johnson caught Starliene suddenly by the ankle and tumbled him from his horse.

The result of the fight that ensued was the same as the result of the one three days before had been, but the end came not so soon. When Starliene was quite sure all resistance had been hammered out of his opponent he brushed his clothes, mounted his horse, flickered the house-boy across the face with his riding-whip and rode jauntily off. Taggert, the puzzled look still in his eyes, gazed for a moment at Johnson and then clattered after his employer.

Johnson sat up weakly, brushed the dirt and blood from his eyes and looked after them. Then he turned with a sickly smile and looked questioningly at the boy, who was holding in his hand a battered watch.

"How long, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Jes' six minutes, suh," answered Jimmy

"H'm."

Johnson changed his posture to an easier one and began to take stock of his injuries.

"Took him a bit longer this time, I think. Next time, Jimmy boy, we'll try to make it ten."

"Yessuh," said Jimmy heartily, wondering at the same time what kind of a strange new game this was of the white men's.

A WEEK had passed when Johnson again met Starliene. He had been to Port-au-Prince to see about a shipment of sugar, and on the way home, in his Ford, he overtook his enemy riding alone on horseback. Johnson drove ahead, then turned his car so as to obstruct the road and waited for the other to come to him.

"Again?" asked Starliene, taking in the situation at a glance.

"Again," said Johnson shortly. "Come down and take it."

"How long is this going to continue?"

"Until you run every time you see me coming," answered Johnson promptly.

"That won't be soon," snorted the big man.

He spoke confidently, but his manner was lacking just a shade of its usual assurance.

Johnson had no one to hold a watch for him this time, but at the end of the fight he judged that a good fifteen minutes had elapsed since the striking of the first blow. But if the fight was longer Starliene made up for the additional trouble given him by administering a thorough thrashing. The big manager had been gone a long time before Johnson was able to drag himself wearily to his car and resume the journey homeward.

On his arrival home he went to bed and stayed there all day—and all night and all the following day. He was shaky and aching when he came out on the veranda of his bungalow for a quiet smoke in the cool of the second evening. Jimmy had been waiting on him and applying liniment to his many cuts and bruises. The boy had wondered, but said nothing. This was indeed a strange game the white men were playing, thought Jimmy.

The next encounter took place in Ennery; and it had lasted full twenty minutes by Jimmy's timepiece when the gendarmes interfered and threatened both participants with arrest for disturbing the peace. The end, however, was in sight, and Johnson was secretly glad that the gendarmes arrived when they did; he was beaten and he knew it. But he was elated to know that he had been on his feet at the end of twenty minutes, and he promised himself that at the next encounter he would come through a victor.

"If you annoy me again I'll have you arrested," threatened Starliene.

"You'll be running soon," retorted Johnson, mopping at his bleeding lips with a bedraggled handkerchief.

Starliene was worried, and he was having trouble in concealing it. The three weeks of fighting was beginning to tell on him, and his rather flabby moral stamina was beginning to weaken. Here was a man who after being badly beaten four times persisted in returning for more, and whom each time he was finding harder to conquer.

He still carried himself with his old jaunty air of superiority, but his eyes had taken a defiant glint that to Taggert, wise fighting man and quick to sense the first sign of fear in another, resembled that of an animal at bay. His laugh came more often and more boisterously than ever, but it was a slow-starting, quick-ending laugh that had no merriment behind it, and Blacksnake Tom smiled inwardly whenever he heard it.

"Tom, if that fellow comes around here run him off," said Starliene on the evening of the day of the fight in Ennery.

"Huh? Oh, all right, boss. He is a nuisance, ain't he?"

Taggert's expression was innocent, but he chuckled softly at something he seemed to find in the magazine he was reading.

NEARLY a week elapsed while Johnson was recuperating from the beating he had been given in Ennery. The stiffness crept out of his joints, and his pains and aches subsided one by one; and then he decided to make one last desperate attempt to turn the feud in his own favor. He felt that the time was now at hand when he was to avenge himself for the months he had been plagued and insulted by the manager of the rival sugar company's mill. He would put an end to it once and for all time.

He took Jimmy and his watch in the car, and in his anxiety to have it over and done with drove the nine miles to Starliene's bungalow at breakneck speed. Blacksnake Tom, sitting alone on the veranda, arose as they came up, gazed curiously for a moment at Johnson and then without a word strode off and disappeared into the brush surrounding the clearing. Johnson was puzzled by this; but he did not worry about it, and he went to the doorway of the house and knocked loudly with his fist upon the open door.

"Who's there?" called a voice which he recognized as belonging to Starliene.

"Johnson. Come out of there and take your medicine," he answered.

The Syrian's voice was high-pitched and tremulous, almost a scream, as he shouted:

"Go 'way from here, you rowdy! Get off my property, or I'll have you arrested."

"Come out of hiding," shouted Johnson in answer. "I told you I'd have you crawling."

"Tom, Tom—chase that ruffian away from here!"

Starliene's voice was worried now.

"Tom—where the —— are you?"

"I won't come in after you," called Johnson. "I don't believe in entering a man's house to beat him up; but you're all that I said you were if you don't come out. I said you were yellow; now I'm proving it."

Johnson felt greatly elated. The victory was already his—Starliene was afraid to come out to fight him. He chuckled suddenly, and then broke into a loud laugh—a laugh that was really joyous.

But alas! His exultation was short lived. Starliene, roaring like a wild bull, plunged from the doorway, and he fought with a reckless abandon that he had not shown before. His attack was overwhelming; he pummeled and kicked and fought with the savage ferocity of a wounded animal. The fight was over in five minutes—and Johnson was not the victor; he lay senseless at the bottom of the veranda steps.

The last blow had barely been struck when Taggert strolled from the brush at the edge of the clearing. He looked at Johnson moaning on the ground and feigned surprize.

"I didn't want to beat him any more," said Starliene. "I wasn't afraid of him. You know I wasn't afraid of him, but——"

"Sure—I know," broke in Taggert.

He looked at Starliene from between half-closed lids and when the other faltered and turned away smiled a knowing, mirthless smile. Taggert knew—he *knew.*

ON THE day of the *Hawk's* arrival in port Johnson waited at the American Club for Captain Mac. Soon he came, in a hired carriage from within which floated whiffs of smoke. They shook hands, and Captain Mac, after a fleeting glance at Johnson's face, motioned him to a near-by chair; and he himself sat opposite and studied the other through a cloud of blue smoke from his cigaret.

Johnson's right ear was torn, and there was a healing cut above one eye; his lip was split, and there was a sunburst of adhesive plaster on his cheek. His expression was downcast, and his whole attitude was one of utter dejection.

"Well?" asked the captain at length.

"Your plan failed, captain," said Johnson with a despondent shake of his head. "A week ago I thought I had him—but I was wrong."

Captain Mac tossed away his cigaret and leaned back in his chair with one hand upon each knee. They were long, wiry, capable-looking hands, large-knuckled and tough-skinned, and the knuckles were crisscrossed by many small scars. They were the fighting hands of One-Two Mac, "the last of the buckos," and with them the little man had hammered his way into recognition as the toughest ship's officer traveling the Western Ocean.

"Go on," said Captain Mac impatiently. "Tell me about it."

"Well, I tackled him three times after you left, and the last time we were still going at the end of twenty minutes when the gendarmes stopped it. He had me beaten, however, so it made no difference. But after that I thought he was afraid—I was sure of it. He told me to keep away from him or he'd have me arrested, and it was that that gave me the impression he was afraid. I thought the next fight would be the last one.

"Well, three days ago I went over to his place and called him out. He refused to come, and he called for Taggert to chase me away. Taggert wasn't around; he had walked off just as I came up—I don't know why. Then I became bolder and reminded Starliene of all the things I had called him and told him they were true. And then, while I was walking up and down with my chest out, he came running out of the door—and he just about slaughtered me. It lasted five minutes! He fought like a madman, and I never had a chance."

"Ah!"

Captain Mac raised his eyebrows. "And now tell me about the fights before that one—what plan did you follow?"

"Well, as each time we fought it took him a little longer to beat me, I figured it was only a question of time before I would be able to beat him. I was improving my defense, and the time in Ennery he hardly hit me at all for the first twelve or fifteen minutes. I thought that the next time I would be able to hold him off until he got tired and then finish him. But the last time he hit so hard and so fast and so furiously that I couldn't defend myself. He is bigger and stronger than I am, and he beat down my guard as if I was a child. It's no use, captain—he's a better man physically than I am."

"But not mentally," said the captain quickly. "You don't know it, but—he's licked."

"What!"

Johnson shook his head.

"He's licked."

And then, changing the subject—

"Can you put me up at your place for a day or so?"

"Glad to—plenty of room. But tell me what you meant by saying——"

"Later."

Captain Mac rose and looked at his watch.

"We'll start now—if you'd just as soon," he said.

IT IS said that a man once stationed himself at the point where the highway from the Cul-de-Sac enters Port-au-Prince and counted thirty thousand travelers in an hour. Nearly all of them are market women, some of whom come from far inland to sit for hours in the open market of the capital with a few cents' worth of produce before them. It is a ragged, bare-footed army—an army of vacant, animal-like faces. An optimist would seek in vain among them for a glimmer of that "divine spark" which is said to burn in each human breast.

"The Cubans say that 'the Haitian is the animal which most nearly resembles man,' " said Johnson as he drove his car through the river of plodding blacks. "Look at them—these are the people Starliene says I am coddling. Poor ——, they need coddling, it seems to me. These are the poorest people in the world. They are always hungry. From birth to death they do not average one meal apiece a day. The average would be lower were it not for mango-time.

"There—see that child in the doorway of

that *caille*. See its little ribs? And there is another—and another. They are hungry—they will be hungry until they die.

"New York is only fourteen hundred miles away. These people are too close to America to expect help. Ship-load after ship-load of food is being sent to the far corners of the earth, while here, at our very doors, is an island of starving people. And they don't need charity—they need only to be told how to help themselves.

"Here is a paradox: The poorest people in the world live in a land overflowing with wealth. It is true; there is no country so full of natural wealth as Haiti—nor is there a country so undeveloped. The natives do not know how to grow the most easily grown vegetable. An animal would die of thirst for lack of intelligence enough to turn on a water-faucet. Often upon the Cul-de-Sac plains you will see dead men, but you will see no vultures.

"You have heard it said that a Jew can not make a living in Scotland? Well, a vulture can not exist in Haiti. At one time there were vultures, but the natives outdid them at their own game—*they ate them*. And Starliene says I am too good to these poor wretches because I pay my employees thirty cents a day!"

"But are they worth helping?" asked Captain Mac with a curious glance at Johnson. "They seem so utterly lacking in human qualities—so——"

"That's why they need to be helped—don't you see? You and I can help ourselves, but they can't."

"M'm."

The captain nodded.

"Starliene is in a hole. He has either to force me to adopt his wage-scale and one-meal-a-day system or give up his graft. He'll make it mighty miserable for me now, I know—but I'll never give in."

"You might ask for police protection," suggested the captain.

"The police never interfere in the quarrels of white men, and Starliene makes it appear a personal quarrel, which in a way it is. Besides, I wouldn't ask for police help. The next time he interferes with me I'll fill him full of buckshot."

The little captain shook his head, but smiled and said nothing.

They arrived at Johnson's bungalow in the early evening. During dinner Captain McGuire was thoughtful and said little. After the meal they went to the veranda and sat silent while the captain rolled and lighted a cigaret and Johnson got his pipe going. The sun had sunk and the evening rain had come and passed out over the bay. From somewhere in the bush came the weird chant of a native chorus.

"Defensive tactics," said the captain at length, "are losing tactics. Aggressiveness is the best defense. You can see the truth of that not only in fist-fighting, but in business, in politics, in—well, in all human activities. Often, in a court of law, you will see a defendant win his case by turning accuser, or by the aggressive methods of his attorney. Political campaigns are won by aggressiveness. Newspapers increase their circulations by aggressiveness. Successful business organizations use aggressive advertising. To go on the defensive, to be satisfied with holding your own, is poor business. Do you see your mistake?"

"You mean that I should have been more aggressive?"

"Exactly. Attack is defense. When you hit a man as hard and as fast as you can you throw him on the defensive, and once a man is on the defensive he is on the way to defeat. By your own words, you have taken the defensive all through. But never-the-less you have him beaten."

"No-o."

Johnson shook his head and smiled grimly.

"Had you seen him the last time we fought, captain, you wouldn't say that. There was no stopping him; he fought like a madman."

"He was mad—mad with fear, do you see? He was fighting with his back to the wall. Cowards, as well as brave men, fight hardest when cornered. Once more will turn the scale. Try it again tomorrow——"

"No—no more, captain; I'm not a glutton for punishment—I know when I've got enough."

"You give up?"

"Yes."

"I thought you were fighting for a principle; that you were fighting for the right to hire and fire and pay and feed your help in accordance with your ideas of right and wrong."

"And so I am."

"But you are giving up."

"No, I am not; I am going to try buckshot."

"And go to jail and leave the 'poor wretches' you have been moaning about to the mercy of Taggert."

"Well——"

For a long time they sat there silently, smoking and staring into the night. Night settled down upon them, and with it came the trade wind, cool and fresh. The night became chill.

At length Allen Johnson sat up and gazed at the glowing spark that was One-Two Mac.

"How about Blacksnake Tom?" he asked slowly. "I was so confident a week ago that I forgot about him; but now——"

"You need not worry about Taggert," said Captain Mac quietly.

* * *

STARLIENE stood in the door of his sugar-mill and stared wide-eyed at the occupants of the automobile which had just driven up. Taggert, just come in from the fields with a gang of laborers, compressed his thin lips and studied the working of the big man's face with a curious interest in his washed-out eyes. He was a student of human nature, was Blacksnake Tom; his profession demanded it.

"You get off my place, Johnson," yelled Starliene.

His voice rose to a scream.

"Get off—d'you hear me! Get off, get off! Hey, Tom put 'im off."

But Taggert, the fighting man, the slave-driver, the student of human nature, had mysteriously disappeared—around the corner of the shed.

"Tom, Tom—where th' —— are you?" howled the big manager in a voice loud enough to be heard far out on the plain.

Taggert's hearing seemed to be bad, for although he was but fifteen feet away he did not answer. He was seated comfortably upon an upturned bucket with his long, cruel whip resting across his knees. But he should have heard his employer call, for he seemed to be listening.

Starliene, still calling, "Tom, Tom," started for the corner around which the foreman had gone; but Johnson was before him.

"No you don't," he said with his hand on the big man's chest. "You're due for a licking; and you're going to get it—now!"

"You ought to be satisfied," snarled Starliene. "I beat you four times. If I have to do it again I'll—I'll kill you—d'you hear! You oughta be satisfied."

"I'll be satisfied when you run like the yellow hound you are."

Johnson looked questioningly at Captain Mac, who sat quietly in the rear of the car; and the little shipmaster nodded.

"Now—run!"

The words were accompanied by two solid smashes that sent Starliene back on his heels. He stood for a moment with his mouth open, surprized by the suddenness of the attack; and then he lunged forward with a cry that was a mixture of fear and rage.

This time, however, he did not meet a man who contented himself with a cautious defense; this time he met an opponent who came half-way and threw caution to the winds. For ten seconds they stood toe to toe, striking furiously; then each fell back from the force of the other's blows. Starliene did not know what to make of this new Johnson and stood irresolutely, staring in wonder; and while he hesitated, wavering, Johnson was again upon him. The big man was thrown on the defensive, and he grappled and tried to wrestle the other to the ground.

But in this he failed—Johnson was too quick for him; and then the vehemence of the smaller man's attack forced him to give ground. He retreated slowly at first, defending himself as best he could, and then faster; and soon, as Johnson showed no signs of weakening, Starliene turned—and ran!

The sound of thudding blows and scuffling feet had lured Blacksnake Tom from his temporary retirement; and during the last half-minute or so of the fight he had stood at the corner of the shed, watching, interested but apparently indifferent as to the outcome. He stood leaning carelessly against the mill, his whip across his shoulders and an end of it grasped in each hand. Captain Mac was still seated in the car, his legs crossed at the knees and a cloud of cigaret smoke hanging above his head in the still afternoon air.

As Starliene went by, running hard, but with the fleeter-footed Johnson at his heels, Taggert glanced quickly at Captain Mac. The little shipmaster was still sitting back at his ease, his knees still crossed. Blacksnake Tom swung his whip, and as the lash twined about Johnson's ankles he pulled like a cowboy throwing a lassoed steer. Johnson turned a half-somersault in the air, plunged head foremost to the earth and lay there.

A shadow thrown on the ground before him warned Taggert, and he turned like a flash, shifting the whip in his hand so as to have the heavy butt-end ready for striking. He knew what to expect and welcomed its coming.

One-Two Mac had uncoiled like a wire spring and, the cigaret still between his lips, leaped from the tonneau of the car toward Taggert, twelve feet away. Taggert's shift of position was quick, but not nearly quick enough; before he could bring the loaded end of his whip into play it was torn from his hands and flung beyond his reach; and a flashing fist crashed twice to his jaw and sent him spinning.

He was tough, Blacksnake Tom, a clean-living man and endowed with a brute-like courage, a professional thug who knew his business, not a man to be overcome in an instant. He shook his head and came on, smiling his thin smile and gaging his opponent with half-closed eyes. And Captain Mac smiled too; a queer, crooked, one-sided smile that drew up one side of his mouth in a leering grimace, the fighting smile—if it could be called a smile—of One-Two Mac, the bucko shipmaster.

Things began happening to Taggert, and with all his man-handling knowledge he was having rough weather of it. One-Two Mac did not fight in his usual manner; usually his attack was tiger-like, beating down his antagonist by the very fury of his onslaught; but he had other methods for Taggert. He was cool and calculating; his blows were accurately judged and timed to the split-second.

Taggert would set himself for a murderous smash; and then a long left arm would lick out and shove him off his balance, and a right fist would crash against his jaw or into his body. The tall foreman's arms were long, unusually long, but he was surprized by having the little captain out-reach him time and again. Always those long arms sliding in and out, like pistons—"one-two, one-two, one-two"—lightning-fast, cutting his face to ribbons and driving into his weakening body.

Taggert's breath was coming in great gasps; one eye was closed, and his lips were bruised and bleeding; his ribs throbbed with a constant ache; but he fought on. His smile had disappeared in a smear of blood.

Taggert's favorite fighting stunt was a rush—a rush in which he used head, shoulders, elbows and fists; and never had he failed to bring down his man with it. He decided to try it, judged carefully the captain's position and plunged forward, head first, like an animated battering-ram.

He met nothing but empty air, and a series of stabbing, rapier-like blows told him the captain had neatly side-stepped. He tried it again—with the same results. Then he stood up and dropped his hands to his sides.

"Let up, Capt'n One-Two Mac," he said thickly. "You might not think it by the looks o' my mug, but I'm laughing—at myself. I'm no fool—I know when to exit gracefully, as they say. I got my nickel's worth. You're a good man."

He turned and walked rapidly away, shaking his head disgustedly and kicking up clods of soil as he walked.

Johnson was sitting up, rubbing a lump on his head and gazing abstractedly at Taggert's whip, on the ground some distance away.

"Well, he ran," remarked the captain, gently massaging with his fingers a bruise on his cheek.

"Yeah," said Johnson.

He arose and looked about. There was no one in sight but a group of natives watching curiously from a distance. .

"Looks like we're left alone on the field of battle," he said. "I guess I can pay my niggers thirty cents a day now, can't I—huh? And feed 'em when and what I want?"

The captain smiled and nodded. He picked his Panama hat from the ground and shook it free of its dust, then took up Taggert's whip and threw it into the tonneau of the car.

"Souvenir," he remarked.

"Now for a late lunch," said Johnson as they climbed into the car, "and then we'll——"

"And then you'll take me back to Port-au-Prince," said One-Two Mac. "I want to sit on the club porch, smoke cigarets and watch the moon climb up over those hills. Quiet and peaceful-like—that's the life. I hate this —— fighting."

Johnson grinned.

CASSIAR GOLD

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Wilbur Watkins

Author of "The Leg of Moose Bill," "Cheechako Luck," etc.

CIRCLE CITY claimed old Jim Gordon as its prize fool. "Cassiar Jim" he was dubbed because the particular object of his folly was the Cassiar Bar, a half-mile stretch of gravel on the swift Chandelar some two hundred miles northeast of Circle.

The men of that busy placer-camp knew nothing as to where Jim came from nor did they care. He was remembered merely as the well-dressed man with strong-looking body and a very old face who had stepped from the deck of a Yukon River steamer some three years back with the air of one possessed of considerable money and a fair portion of horse-sense, but who subsequently had proved himself to be pitifully lacking in the latter quality.

It had early become known that Jim was a total stranger in the North, that he was not a mining-man, that he had no great amount of money, but was as hungry for gold as a wolf for meat. He appeared to be one of that deluded band of pilgrims who journey north each Summer to wash a fortune from the Yukon sands only to drift out again at the approach of Winter with dreams shattered and what little money they had left in the hands of road-house keepers and traders.

Jim, however, did not drift out that Fall. Instead he drifted farther north.

During the two months in which he nosed about the diggings on Mammoth and Mastodon Creeks looking for a piece of ground that he could work on a "lay," he heard much talk of the Cassiar Bar which, though known to contain gold in paying quantities, had long ago been given up as hopeless. The gold was conceded to be beyond reach of human hands.

Nature it seemed had placed a lock upon this wealth that human ingenuity had failed to break. For close to nine months each year the bar was buried beneath glacier ice; for two months a torrent of muddy water rushed over it. During the few remaining weeks in the later Fall when the stream had shrunk to a rivulet and before the glacier ice again began to pile up, the Cassiar Bar was open to exploitation but with the ever constant danger of having mining-equipment swept away by flood water from Fall rains.

A half-dozen outfits had encountered this disaster in the past, and aside from the money that had been sunk there, scurvy, pneumonia and accidents had claimed a toll of a dozen lives. It seemed the abiding place of evil fortune, and for six years prior to the coming of old Jim Gordon the Cassiar Bar had remained undisturbed in the black depths of the East Fork Cañon.

From the stories he heard, Jim fell a

victim to the lure of that bar. Friendly advice and ridicule alike rolled from him like gravel through a sluice. He bought a boat and outfit and headed alone for the Chandelar.

In the Spring he was back, said nothing of what he had accomplished, worked through the Summer as nozzle man for a hydraulic outfit on Mammoth Creek, and in the Fall returned to the Cassiar Bar.

The next year it was the same, and when he came down that third Spring he bore scant resemblance to the clean, well-dressed, respectable fellow that he had been when he came there. Attired in ragged, greasy overalls and faded green sweater, with his old-looking face seeming ages older beneath the flopping brim of a battered felt hat, dirty and grizzled and weather-beaten, he bore every vestige of the old inveterate grub-stake prospector who knows that life lies behind him and that gold in any quantity can not repay him for his wasted years.

His eyes alone belied his appearance. In their steel-gray depths gleamed the light of victory. Jim claimed to have solved the combination to the treasure-chamber of the Cassiar Bar and was ready to take a fortune out that Fall.

Circle City laughed at him, said the North had "got" him, he was "looney," would have to "be sent outside under escort" if he didn't stop thinking and talking about that infernal bar.

Horton of the Yukon Trading Company was perhaps the only man in the camp who harbored a friendly feeling for the misguided old fellow, and one evening when they were alone together in Horton's store the trader made a firm effort to dissuade him from wasting further time or money on a proposition so forlorn. But Jim answered his advice as he answered the ridicule of others.

"I've found a pocket of heavy gold," he stated simply, "and I know that it will pay to work it with a crew of men even for only twenty days."

"But you can't work it half that long without getting drowned out!" Horton expostulated. "You don't know mining and you don't know men—the kind we have up here—and you're bucking a game that the best miners in the North gave up six years ago."

"Can't help that. The gold is there and there won't be any rain to bother this Fall."

"How do you know there won't—there always is rain."

"Well, old Chief Robert at the Chandelar Indian Village declares it will be a dry Summer, a regular drought like they had twenty-one years ago. He says all signs point to it."

"Signs, ——! You're too old, Jim, to gamble on the word of an ignorant Siwash!"

That apparently touched Jim in a tender spot.

"It's not a gamble. It's common sense!" he flared back. "That Indian knows, and he wouldn't lie to me—he's my friend. And I'm not old either. It's worry and failure that's carved my face like a totem pole. I've made one fortune and lost it, but my body is sound and I'll make another—before snow flies, too."

Then for an instant, for the first time in that camp, Jim's habitual barrier of reticence crumbled and Horton learned the secret of his money hunger, the motive that impelled his struggle for fortune in the cruelest land under the sun.

"I've got to make it!" he repeated slowly. "Got to make it quick, too. ——, how I hate this country! I've got a family back in the States, Horton. They've always had the good things of life—poverty would break their hearts—kill them outright, I believe. They are depending on me, and my last dollar will go for an outfit to work the Cassiar Bar! There's no two ways about it—I got to get that gold!"

Horton immediately used this confession to strengthen his argument.

"If you've got a family, then in the name of common sense go back to them. If they're the kind worth working for they'll welcome you flush or broke. This roughneck country is no place for a man like you. Go back, Jim, 'fore you're plumb busted and have to fan a muck-stick in some deep drift for your grub."

Jim solemnly shook his grizzled head.

"No, it is too late. I'd be a quitter to leave now when I'm morally certain that I'm going to win. I'd rather make the effort and leave my bones to rot in the gravel of Cassiar Bar then to live with the knowledge that I'm yellow."

Horton produced other points of objection, chief of which was that Jim could never succeed in hiring men to go with him in view of the fact that his was a "bedrock" proposition, no gold no pay. And this proved to be very nearly correct. Even though Jim offered wages of fifteen dollars per day, so black was the reputation of Cassiar Bar, coupled with the uncertainty of getting their pay, that he succeeded in getting only the riff-raff of the camp, five men in all.

HALF of the short Summer was gone before Jim's expedition was ready to set out. The Indian's prophecy had so far proved true. It was the hottest, driest season that any white man could remember in Alaska, with the muddy Yukon at its lowest level and the air for days at a time thick and pungent with smoke from distant forest fires.

So Jim was in a most optimistic mood one July night when he and Horton stood together on the river-bank in front of Horton's store, the most pretentious building in the long row of log-cabins flanking the water-front street of Circle, and watched Jim's men carry his supplies aboard two long poling-boats snubbed to the bank below.

Horton, failing to dissuade the stubborn old man from his hare-brained venture, had sold him his outfit at cost, and now though well-aware of the uselessness of further argument he could not refrain from voicing his pessimistic thoughts on the matter.

"Jim," he observed, "if you do find gold, with that crew you've got, it will be the most unlucky event in your life."

"Beggars can't be choosers," Jim laughed; "I guess they'll do all right."

"They'll do you to a finish if they get the chance. If you had combed all Alaska I doubt if you could have found more potential hell in human form than what's in 'Big Nigger' Le Moyne and that crack-brained 'Silver-Skull.' Nigger is known throughout the Yukon as a natural born trouble maker. They say he works two shifts a day—one for his boss and one for the devil, hatching trouble in the bunk-house at night. And everybody knows that Silver-Skull is just plain crazy and as liable to sink a pick in your head as in the gravel. The other three are strangers around here but they don't look none too sweet to me. Take this friendly tip from me, Jim—can Big Nigger and the looney Kid."

Jim shook his head.

"I'm obliged for the advice, Horton, but I can't follow it; can't get anybody to take their places even if I wanted to let them go, which I don't. Nigger is the best miner of the lot, and as to the boy, he's harmless. He begged like a baby for the job; came to my cabin one night, stood there for a moment staring at me with those wild, crazy eyes, and then informed me that he was going to work for me. Before I could answer he turned loose the darnedest rigmarole I ever heard. It ran something like this: 'They say my name's Clark—I don't know—I can't remember. They say I got hurt in Dawson when I was working for some hydraulic outfit and got into a scrap with a straw boss and he bounced a boulder off my head, and I was in the hospital a long time, and now I'm well again but can't remember nothing. A silver plate will fix my head all right. I want a job that pays something—nobody'll give me a job—I flunky round the restaurants for my grub—but I gotta earn some money to get that silver plate."

"He flings that at everybody that will waste time in listening to him," Horton declared.

"Well, he ran on like that for some time and finally ended with: 'Will you take me on! Will you take me on!' And before I could even answer yes or no a new idea hit him, and he flopped down on the floor and encircled my legs in a grip of iron, crying out the most pathetic plea I've ever heard: 'My God! you got to take me, mister! I wanta get fixed so's I can think and remember! I got folks somewhere—a mother and sister, too—I dream about 'em—see 'em every night natural as life—they want me to come home, but I don't know where. Take me on, mister! I'll work like a dog for you!' To shut him up I said I would take him. And why not? He's strong as a bull, and I need his labor—they say he is a fair enough cook—and —— knows the poor fellow needs help. If things go right he'll get his silver plate."

"That's the most misguided charity I've ever heard of!" Horton declared in a tone of mingled pity and disgust. "You can't help him, Jim, and yet you put him in position to work you irreparable harm. The Cassiar Bar is no place for a crazy man!"

A shout from the men below informed them that the cargo was aboard.

"I'm willing to take a chance on that," Jim said, "and now, so long."

Horton gripped his outstretched hand, wishing him the best of luck, and he stood watching this man he had tried to befriend scramble down the bank and into one of the heavily laden boats which quickly swung out into the grip of the current and away downstream. When the boats had disappeared in the smoke haze among distant wooded islands the trader turned away with a shake of his head and the solemn observation, "Well, if old Jim pulls any money out of that jack-pot I'll say the Lord sure loves fools!"

WHEN Jim's expedition reached the mouth of the Chandelar and the up-stream trip began he soon learned that he had two very capable men, Big Nigger Le Moyne, and one Mike Smith, a surly fellow near his own age with a sturdy body tough as iron. Mike had stopped Jim on the street one day with the gruff demand—

"You lookin' for men?"

"Yes," Jim answered, and explained his proposition. All the while the other man was looking him over from head to foot, noting that they were of about the same height and build, and when Jim finished, Mike declared gruffly:

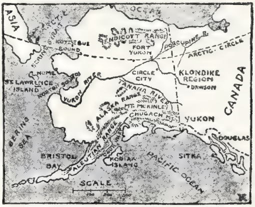
"All right, I'll go with you on the strength of what you say. But mind you now—" he shook a huge, red-haired, dirty fist under Jim's nose—"I can lick you, old man, and as sure as things don't pan out as you say and you beat me out of one cent of my wages, I'll pound you to a pulp!"

Mike and Big Nigger, so called from his huge frame, flat nose, thick lips and swart complexion, were both expert boatmen. So Nigger, with a black mustached Greek who styled himself "Murphy," and claimed the profession of hard-rock miner and "Red" Allen, a "busted" mining-camp gambler, were put in charge of one of the boats, while Jim, with Mike and Silver-Skull to help him, took the other.

Silver-Skull had undergone a remarkable change in appearance from the day when Jim first saw him. With his dirty beard shaved off, his tangled brown hair trimmed, and his greasy, ragged clothing replaced by woolen shirt and overalls he appeared a clean-cut, good-looking fellow in his early twenties, and the most reliable one of the crew except for the strange, wild look in his exceptionally large brown eyes.

He and Jim labored every day on the line with Mike in the stern heaving on a long pole to guide the boat against the strong current. In many swift stretches of river where the odds were about even on their pulling the load up or it dragging them back the boy would grit his teeth, grind hands and feet deep into the sand and pull with every ounce of his strength. Certainly no Malemiut dog ever worked harder under its master's lash than Silver-Skull struggling through many long days on the river to win his silver plate.

From the first Nigger took the lead, and even though he set a very stiff pace hoping to demonstrate his own prowess by leaving the other boat far behind, he was seldom successful. Usually the coffee-pot was scarcely steaming over his evening campfire when Jim's boat pulled up along side, and the men dried their clothing, and ate together, but talked little. They were not a congenial lot.



It developed that Mike and Nigger were old acquaintances having worked for the same outfit in Dawson several years back. But neither was proud of that fact. They had scant use for each other. Mike considered himself a better miner and a better man generally than Nigger, the chronic trouble-maker. Nigger confidentially advised Jim to watch out for Mike; that he possessed a violent temper and a mean, quarrelsome disposition that at one time had landed him in Federal prison at McNiel's Island for assault with intent to kill.

With the passing of day after day of heartbreaking toil, continually drenched in the ice-cold water and tortured by clouds of gnats and mosquitoes, much ill humor developed in Jim's crew. The opinions of Nigger and Mike were always at variance and they were ever jangling and quarreling. Murphy began to take especial pleasure in deviling and ridiculing the boy for his lack of sense, which the boy answered with either a vacant stare or a silly grin and the remark that as soon as he got that silver plate his head would be as good as the best of them. The red-haired gambler sat morose and silent except when complaining bitterly about the long hours, the hard work and the "rotten" grub.

The grouch on the part of the men, however, did not prevent their making fairly good time. The weather remained dry. The water level in the river continued to fall, and Jim was highly elated as mile after mile of spruce-covered bank was left behind, and out of the level flat ahead rose green timbered hills with the snow-capped saw-tooth peaks of the Arctic Range looming dim beyond.

At the close of the twenty-ninth day they reached these hills, and the Chandelar Indian Village. Here Jim resolved to lay over a day to visit with the old chief and his ten husky sons, and to give his men a little rest before entering on the last fifty miles of riffle and rapids that still separated them from their destination.

When they were ready to leave next morning Nigger called Jim aside.

"Say, Jim," he began, "I got a little something I want to talk over with you."

"Fire away. What is it?"

"Well, its like this: Murphy and Red are sick of their job and talking of flying the coop. I reckon I might be able to hold 'em down but I gotta have a little more money for doing it, say 'bout twenty-five dollars per day."

On the instant Jim's face flushed red and his fists doubled. He was strongly tempted to smash Nigger's mouth, but he held his temper and reasoned a moment. He knew that Nigger had his two boat companions bull-dozed into following his lead in anything, and the fact that he had not asked an increase for them also, led Jim to surmise that aside from Nigger's selfish desire to increase his own profits, he really had the welfare of the expedition at heart, and if so, and he were really able to hold the other men, it would be well worth the increase in his wages. On the other hand, if successful now, Nigger might ask again and again for more pay.

Jim knew that he was cornered. If Nigger quit and took the other two with him the expedition was doomed. Past experience had taught him the uselessness of trying to hire any of the Indian friends. Fear of the evil spirits with which their imagination peopled Cassiar Bar would not permit their working there.

"All right," he said; "I'll pay you twenty-five."

"And you got to agree," Nigger added, "that if we don't strike pay I get what grub is left as payment on my wages."

"Yes, you can have the grub."

"Good! I reckon things will run pretty smooth from here out."

Nigger wheeled and strode away to his boat. Jim followed slowly down the shore with fear of the truth of Horton's warning weighing heavy on his mind.

ONE cool evening late in August they reached the Cassiar Bar which lay at the foot of a swift rapids in a deep, narrow valley where the river rushed down between towering spruce-clad hills. Well up on the side of one of these hills, above the highest marks of glacier ice, nestled two rotting log-cabins and a row of crude graves marking the spot where Jacques Cassiar, discoverer of that bar, and others who had followed him, had left their bones in the frozen earth along with the gold they had failed to get.

It was indeed a lonely and dismal spot. The first sight of it weighed oppressively on the spirits of Jim's men, and the drone of the spruce tops swayed by a chill north wind blended with the sullen roar of the rapids to form what seemed to them a promise of impending evil, a prophesy that additional graves would dot that hillside before they saw the last of the gloomy place.

In the heart of Jim alone the flame of hope burned bright. He saw the higher portions of the bar already above the surface of the water and felt certain that another two weeks of favorable weather with night frosts at the head of the river would bring the water down to the spot where he made his find the Fall before, and the fortune which he knew lay there would be within his grasp.

When the boats were shoved up into the dead-water slough between the sand-bar and bank opposite the cabins, Jim ordered Mike and Nigger to wade across and pan along the exposed surface of the bar. They did so, soon returning with specimens—"colors" and flakes of gold concentrated on the bottoms of their pans—which they pronounced "—— good surface prospects."

That served to revive the low spirits of the men considerably and the work of unloading was quickly accomplished. They stowed the grub in the larger cabin which was partitioned into two rooms, one of which was to serve as Jim's quarters and the other as cook- and mess-room. In the second cabin a small stove was set up and bunks arranged for the men. And here that night, in warmth and comfort, with their pipes alight and a hearty supper under their belts, and with doubt and uncertainty as to getting paid for their days of toil on the river entirely dispelled by memory of the golden grains they had seen in the pans, the gloomy pessimism of Jim's crew gave way to the thrills and the hopes and the expectations of "gold fever." For the first time they all conversed good humoredly.

"Even if we don't locate the pocket the old man talks about, and no rain falls, we can come pretty near shoveling out our pay anywhere along that bar," Nigger declared.

"Yep, it looks like I'll get my grub-stake for the Winter anyway," Mike agreed.

"And me a poker-stake," observed Red. He had resurrected from his dunnage-bag a deck of playing-cards and by the light of a candle was busily dealing poker hands on the bottom of an old packing-case.

For a moment the Greek desisted from his habitual twisting of the ends of his long black mustache, and with a sly wink at Nigger and a crafty light in his little black eyes, suggested—

"If we find good lot of gold, mebbe we get plenty more pay, eh?"

"Now you're talking, Murf!" Nigger laughed; "but we'll see about that later."

"I'm sure gonta get that silver plate," the kid piped up from the dim corner back of the stove where he perched on a block of wood.

EARLY the following morning they went over the ground and decided on a method of operation. At the head of the bar a long backbone of granite projecting into the stream deflected the current far toward the opposite shore. Pointing to this Jim said:

"That's what caused the bar to form. It acts like a riffle in a sluice-box, and I figured that if there was any heavy gold here it would be somewhere close below that rock. I was right. The first of last October the water was at its lowest level and I started a hole right at the edge of it and opposite that outer finger of granite. I worked at it through three days of rain and snow and got down about ten feet into coarse gravel and boulders. When I quit at dark I scraped up a panful and washed it out in the cabin. It netted a handful of shot gold that nearly drove me crazy for a moment. Some particles were as big as beans. Next morning a foot of water was running over my shaft. Then the first big cold snap hit, the river froze and started piling up the glacier ice. I couldn't hit another tap, but I do know exactly where to dig as soon as the water drops another four feet."

"We'll need two sections of sluice and a Chinese pump," observed the practical Nigger.

With whip-saw and axes all hands set to work and in fifteen days when the river had sunk to the desired level their equipment was ready—sluice-boxes, cleaning-tub, riffle-blocks, and the pump, a crude contraption capable of lifting a fair sluice head of water to a height of six feet with the labor of one man.

At the place which Jim indicated a shaft was started, and with the whole crew in a state of feverish expectancy they quickly penetrated through twelve feet of sand, gravel and boulders. Big Nigger washed the first panful scraped from the granite bedrock. Kneeling on the brink of the shrunken river, with deft occilations of the iron pan he soon reduced the contents to a double handful. When at last the motion of his big hands ceased the eager eyes of all saw through the muddy water on the bottom of the pan, among the pebbles and the black sand, the glint of many particles of gold.

A tremendous shout went up:

"Pay! Pay! Sure as you're livin'!"

And they continued to yell and dance wildly about as if this was their original discovery and the gold belonged to them and not to the grizzled, glad-faced old man in whose name the ground was staked and who now quietly examined the rich contents of the pan that meant to him vindication of his judgment, proof of his spoken word and fortune for himself and those he loved.

FOR five days they worked frenziedly shoveling the pay dirt through the sluice, and when Jim decided to make his first clean-up, and the riffle blocks were removed and all particles of gravel, black sand and gold were carefully washed down into the cleaning tub, every man who witnessed the operation was astounded at the quantity of gold.

When the clean-up was finished Jim dumped the proceeds into a bucket and had Silver Skull help him carry it to his cabin. As they moved away up the hillside four pairs of eyes followed them with envious, gold-hungry gaze.

"By rights the gold belongs to them what digs it," Nigger declared in the tone of one who feel cheated.

Mike swore at him contemptuously.

"Singing that old tune already, eh! It's got you kicked out of every camp on the Yukon and if you don't dry up it's liable to get you kicked out of here."

After supper that night Jim called the men to his cabin one at a time and with a small balance weighed out generous measures of gold and paid each one in full. Nigger was the last to be called. He seated himself at the table and closely watched the weighing of his gold as if in fear of being cheated. When it was passed to him he dumped it into an empty tobacco sack, arose, took a step toward the door, then turned again to Jim.

"Say, I reckon you ought to know the boys are howlin' pretty strong about a raise."

"Well, what of it!"

Before Jim's blazing eyes Nigger's gaze shifted to the floor.

"Oh, nothing much, but I might be able to hold 'em down if there was anything in it for me."

Without a word Jim sprang up, crossed the room to the wood-pile back of the cook stove, snatched up a big double bitt ax and with this raised menacingly in his hands he advanced to within four feet of Nigger and roared out:

"You ——, sneaking liar! Get out! Pack your duds into one of the boats and hit the river. If you're here in the morning I'll chop you so —— fine the —— won't know you!"

Instantly a remarkable change flashed over Nigger's face. It went as dead white as his swarthy skin would permit, and he made a pitiful effort to pull his thick twitching lips into a smile.

"Aw, ——, Jim!" he whined; "didn't you know I was jokin'? I don't want no more pay. I'm plumb satisfied and I'll do all I can for you. I was just jokin' you, Jim."

Though far from being convinced Jim lowered his ax.

"You've got that to prove," he replied; "I'll keep my eye on you in the future and the first time you try to start trouble out you go."

With profuse declarations of his good intention Nigger shuffled out and returned to the bunk-house where he found that Red had opened a "poker snap." Excepting Silver Skull, who sat in his usual corner staring at the red belly of the stove, all the men were playing. They had spread a blanket over the table and in the light of a half-dozen candles cards and gold changed hands rapidly.

Refusing their invitation to take a hand, he watched the game for a moment in silence and then suddenly interrupted with the curt command:

"Hold the deal a moment, boys. There's something that I reckon we ought to talk over——"

"Aw, ——! Can the jabber!" Red cut in peevishly.

"Shut up! This is for your benefit more than mine. I'd like to see the men I work with get a square deal, and that's just what you boys are not getting!"

That claimed their full attention and the game ceased.

"Come on, spit it out. We're listening."

"You're not getting a square deal," Nigger repeated, "nowhere near it. Your labor is worth a —— sight more than what you're getting. You know that and Jim knows it, too. You've speculated with your time and labor; have all worked like dogs, and the best that you stand to win is little more than a grub-stake. It ain't right, boys, but you can mighty quick make it right."

"Well, how?"

"Ask for double wages and you'll get it."

"——, yes! You'll get the boot!" Mike cried, sarcastically. "Ask for a raise and you'll be told to hit the river and you'll muck in the deep diggings for your grub this Winter. Nigger, you show less judgment and horse sense than a drunken squaw. Why, even a Siwash kid could tell from the cut of old Jim's jaw that he can't be bluffed, or bull-dozed, or forced into anything!"

"He can't, eh! I can prove you're wrong!"

On to the table before them he tossed his poke of gold. They could plainly see that it contained close to twice the amount they had received. "I've drawn double what you poor suckers get ever since we left the village, and all because I had the guts to ask for it!" Nigger cried triumphantly, and with great satisfaction noted the look of sullen anger darkening the faces of his companions.

"It's a dirty jip!" growled Red.

"Why you not tell me?" Murphy complained peevishly. He had proved to be a typical mining-camp "sucker," lost when not tagging like a yellow dog at the heels of a stronger man, and now it was a considerable surprize to find that he was not as deep in the confidence and good graces of his master as he had been led to believe.

"It's time enough to tell you now," Nigger replied.

"Well, it strikes me that you're hatchin' a deal that's liable to beat us all out of a job," declared Mike.

"You can bet a stack of blues that I'll hike the ante on him first thing in the morning," Red flared up.

"Me, too," Murphy seconded.

"That's talkin'!" Nigger flattered, and turning to the boy he demanded gruffly—

"How do you stand, addlepate?"

The boy turned his vacant stare upon him and without the slightest indication of having followed their conversation answered stupidly—

"Reckon I'm sure gonta get that silver plate all right."

"Follow my lead and you'll get a gold one!" Nigger promised with a boisterous laugh.

Throughout the rest of the evening Nigger tried in vain to swing the obdurate Mike to his way of thinking. His every argument was answered by the stubborn declaration:

"You can just count me plumb out of it. I can read your hand as plain as daylight, and there ain't nothing in it but a heap of grief. You can't fool me; I can see just what you're leading up to. If Jim don't come across you'll insist that we take over the ground and work it ourselves, and first thing we know we'll be up to our ears in trouble."

"Them prison bars put a yaller stripe in your back, eh?" Nigger sneered.

"Mebbe so. But I'll tell the cock-eyed world there ain't gold enough in this infernal bar to tempt me to run afoul the law again!"

"Suit yourself. I got no particular ax to grind—just want to see everybody get a square deal. I reckon the rest of you boys are solid to the finish, eh?"

"Betcha my life!" from Murphy.

"I'll be in the pot when the last card is turned," declared Red, and with a swift sidewise at Nigger across his long pitted nose he added significantly—

"Sky's the limit with me."

SO NEXT morning when they went to Jim's cabin for breakfast they were cocked and primed for a strike. But Jim beat them to it. He had done considerable thinking that night with the result that the men were scarcely seated at the table where Silver Skull placed black coffee, flapjacks and bacon before them, when Jim emerged from his room and curtly informed them that from that day on the wages of every man would be twenty-five dollars per day.

"I have intended all along to pay you as much as the ground justified," he said; "but I didn't want to make any big promises which I was not sure of being able to keep. Yesterday's clean-up proves the value of the claim beyond any doubt, and I'm mighty glad that I can now pay you boys all you are worth to me."

In the hearty ejaculations of appreciation which this called forth from the men, Nigger took no part. He knew that Jim had out-generaled him, and his chagrin at the failure of his plan was evidenced by his silence and his scowling brows.

With the exception of Nigger, Jim's unexpected generosity for the time being won his crew body and soul. For several days in excellent humor they tore at the frozen gravel. But every night in the bunkhouse Nigger harped on his old tune, "the gold belongs to them that digs it," and belief in the justice of this desirable theory steadily grew stronger in the gold-greedy minds of Red and the Greek. Mike's fear of the law, however, made him deaf to all argument.

FIVE rich clean-ups had gone up the hillside to Jim's cabin, and the cold, short days of October were upon them when the work suddenly slowed up. Nigger and his two confederates had gone to "sniping." When down in the pit, beyond view of Jim who worked at the pump, they began fingering through each promising shovelful of gravel to remove visible particles of gold before heaving it into the sluice-box. Mike protested and threatened to "squeal." They laughed at him, called him a "white-livered old squaw," and invited him to "tell and be ——." He kept silent for he knew that Jim was powerless to stop the thieving and any effort of his to do so would lead to trouble—exactly what Nigger wanted.

Finally the long spell of dry weather came to an end. Thick, gray clouds settled low on the hills, and they went to work one morning in a drizzling rain. Jim knew that the close of the season was at hand and exhorted his men to do their best, promising a generous bonus if they filled the riffles for another clean-up before the river rose and drowned them out. But with Nigger's inflaming council ever in their minds they were in no mood to exert themselves for another. It was gold in large quantities for themselves that they wanted, and they sniped industriously to the tune of Nigger's bitter complaining.

"Pretty bunch of suckers we are! Fed on rotten grub, drenched to the skin, half-frozen, working like slaves in the bottom of a hole for a —— old skinflint that can't spend a half of the money we've made for him! Now the camp's ready to shut down and all we got is a bare grub-stake. 'Tain't right, not by a —— of a lot!"

By noon the drizzle had become a downpour, and by mid-afternoon it turned to thick wet snow. Jim noted the rapidly rising river and ordered the men from the pit that he might make his final clean-up. Nigger fingered through his last shovelful, extracted a pea-sized nugget, and turned reproachfully to Mike.

"We'd all have had a hatful of these if it hadn't been for your lack of guts," he whined.

Mike swore at him contemptuously and threatened.

"I'm plumb sick of your —— belly achin', and if you don't keep your big mouth closed I'll turn you over to the marshal when we get down to Circle. You've sniped a —— sight more gold here than you've earned!"

Nigger returned no answer. With eyes narrowed to tiny slits and his big hands clenched convulsively on the handle of his shovel he stood motionless while the other men left the pit. But a moment later the sound of Mike's angry voice brought him scrambling after them.

"Put that down!"

The Greek in passing along the line of sluice had seen a nugget as big as a walnut lodged between two riffle bars, and as Jim at the moment had his back toward them bending over the cleaning tub, he snatched the nugget up, and answered Mike's command with a sly wink and the observation—

"She make one ver' fine souvenir."

Mike stooped and seized a rock.

"Put it down, you —— sluice-box robber!" he roared. "Drop it or I'll bounce this off your head!"

Murphy had extended his hand to replace the gold when, over Mike's shoulder, he saw Nigger advancing from the edge of the pit with his shovel raised, and the ferocious look on the big man's face and an emphatic shake of his head, nerved him to brave Mike's wrath.

"No," he said coolly, "I guess I keep it."

At the same instant Nigger swung his shovel and brought it, sharp edge down, with terrific force upon Mike's head. And so deeply did the blade crunch through his skull that as Mike plunged forward on his face the shovel handle was wrenched from Nigger's grasp.

"I saved your life, Murf! He'd have crushed your head like an egg-shell!" the big man breathed huskily, and glared about as if defying contradiction or criticism of his act.

Jim had witnessed the cold-blooded, unjustified assault and for an instant stood paralyzed in the grip of utter horror. Then springing forward he helped Red pry the shovel from Mike's head and roll him on his back. The bloody face upturned to the driving snow was that of a corpse.

"You've done it! You've done it! He's stone dead!" Jim wildly accused Nigger who with the trembling Murphy beside him watched but made no move to help.

"Can't help it. He deserved it—ex-convict, dangerous as ——. He'd have killed Murf," Nigger answered in cool even tones, and with a cruel gleam in his little black eyes that left no doubt in Jim's mind as to his personal satisfaction in his bloody handiwork.

And in that instant, with the one man of his crew who had opposed the will of this murderer lying dead at his feet, there came to Jim a full realization of the peril that hung over him, and he stared stupidly about at the faces of the other men whose eyes refused to meet his own.

Nigger broke the long moment of silence.

"Red, help the old man make his clean-up; and you better hurry—the river'll be up here in another hour. You come with me, Murf. We'll attend to Mike."

They wrapped the body in a dirty strip of canvas. Nigger slung it across his shoulder; and with the Greek carrying pick and shovel trudging beside him moved away toward the row of graves on the hillside. Red and Jim set to work removing the riffle-blocks.

The early darkness of a wild stormy night had closed on the camp before Jim's work was finished. Mike was at rest in his water-soaked grave and the other men were at supper when Jim finally trudged up the hillside with his scanty clean-up. The sound of their voices ceased the instant he entered, and the meal was finished in silence except for the excited chatter of the stupid-eyed boy who waited on them and had just learned Nigger's version of the tragedy.

Jim was too perturbed to eat anything, and when the men had finished and filed from the room, he rose from the table and for a long time paced the floor in great anxiety and dread of the outcome of the conference which he knew would be held in the other cabin that night.

"What was Nigger talking about. just before I came in?" he finally demanded of Silver Skull.

"I dunno. I can't remember nothin' special—reckon he just said we all had to stick together."

After a pause he added—

"Nigger was pokin' round in your room—said he'd fixed your gun all right."

Jim rushed into the next room and snatched his carbine from the head of his bunk. It was the only rifle in camp. He took it to the light and carefully examined it. The firing pin had been hammered down and the gun was useless.

He had scarcely recovered from the shock of this discovery when the sound of voices in the direction of the river claimed his attention. Opening the door he called:

"Who's that! What you doing there!"

The voice of Red answered:

"Pullin' up the boats. Just in time, too. The river's already swept away the sluice-boxes and the pump."

Jim waited until they returned to their cabin and then cautiously crept down to inspect their work. His worst suspicions were confirmed. The boats had been dragged so high from the water and were so tightly jammed between some trees that the labor of no one man could ever bring them down again.

A groan rose from his tortured heart:

"My ——, I'm done for! My one chance of escape is cut off. Before morning Nigger will have that other pair whipped into any shape he wants them. If I take to the hills they'll track me down. They'll rob me—murder me like they did poorMike."

He returned to the cabin to crouch for a long time in a shivering, wretched heap beside the stove where presently his troubled mind evolved a plan that held a hope of saving not only his life but also that which was far more dear to him—his gold.

Silver Skull had finished his supper dishes and was ready to leave for the bunk-house when Jim addressed him.

"Boy, I've given you a square deal. I've treated you like a man when there wasn't another soul that would have treated you as well as a dog. I've given you what you begged for—a chance to be a man again, to find yourself and those you love. A few months from now you will no doubt be whole again. You'll return to your mother and your sister like one from the grave; and all because I was your friend. Isn't that right?"

The boy answered with tear-filled eyes and trembling lips—

"Uh huh—I'll be able to think and remember and I'll find 'em just like you say."

"And all because I've stuck by you," Jim repeated. "Well, I'm in a tighter fix now than you were ever in, and I want to know right now if you intend to stick by me or follow Big Nigger Le Moyne."

"By you, Jim, sure—I'd work like a dog for you!"

"I believe you, boy; and now listen to what I say and for ——'s sake try to remember."

Jim painted the other men in their true colors. He told of the cold-blooded murder of Mike; of his own fears—that he felt certain he would be robbed and perhaps murdered. And so great was the effect of his words on the weak mind of his companion that by the time he had finished the boy was worked into a state of frenzy.

"I'd like to kill 'em! I'd like to kill 'em!" he cried, and sprang from his seat to pace several times wildly about the room with his face contorted by rage and a savage gleam in his eyes that betokened homicidal insanity.

Finally he snatched the big ax from the wood-pile and swung it so viciously about his head repeatedly hissing, "I'll kill 'em! I'll chop 'em up!" that Jim for the moment had fears for his own safety and sought to calm him down.

"Put the ax away, boy; that won't help any. Now sit down here and listen closely to everything I say."

With difficulty Jim quieted him sufficiently to give attention to his words, and no sooner had he finished speaking than the boy returned to his pacing the room and swinging the ax and his husky voicing of his lust for blood:

"I wanta kill! I wanta kill! I wanta kill!"

Jim watched for a moment in great perplexity before proceeding with the plan on which his one slim chance of life and fortune rested.

* * *

FROM the evidence which Nigger and his men viewed the next morning, the events which took place within the dingy walls of Jim's cabin during the remainder of that night must have been horrible indeed.

They arose at dawn and looked out on a cold, white world. The storm had abated but the ground, the cabins, the drooping branches of the spruce trees were swathed in a thin blanket of heavy frozen snow and a few hard pellets still slanted down from the north. Considerably perplexed as to the reason for Silver Skull's absence throughout the night, they hurried down to inspect the boats and were re-assured by finding them in place. They returned to the bunk-house and waited a while for the smoke of the breakfast fire to rise from Jim's cabin. But no smoke came, and presently Nigger slipped a big revolver into the deep side pocket of his mackinaw coat and led the others on their quest of sudden fortune.

As they approached the rear of Jim's cabin strange sounds reached them from within—an idiotic muttering and the steady beat of footsteps on the floor. Nigger rounded the corner and almost tripped over a snow-covered human body prostrate before the door.

"——'s fire! What we got here!"

He stooped, seized the body by a leg and flopped it over. Red cried out in horror:

"—— it's old Jim! His head and arms hacked off!"

The body was indeed in a pitiful state of mutilation. Not only were the head and arms completely severed but also many long lashes in the faded old green sweater and greasy overalls showed where fiendish slashes of an ax had cut deep in the flesh beneath.

After a moment of stupefied silence Nigger declared—

"It's the work of that looney kid—and now I reckon we'd better 'tend to him."

Nigger shoved open the door. Silver Skull, pale and haggard of face, with ax in hand paced back and forth among overturned table and benches and tin dishes and cooking utensils that cluttered the floor—mute evidence of a tremendous struggle having taken place there. But Nigger's first glance was a fleeting one, for at the creak of the opening door the boy emitted a piercing scream and rushed upon him with ax raised high. The three men fled precipitously and the boy slammed the door shut again.

"Did you see them eyes! He's plumb ravin' crazy!" Nigger gasped when they stopped at a safe distance. "Well, I'll cook his goose in short order."

He drew his gun from his pocket and again advanced on the cabin. Red ran after him pleading:

"Don't plug him, don't plug him, Nigger! He's played smack into our hands—a streak of luck we dreamed of! All we got to do is to lay him by the heels and turn him over to the marshal down at Circle and it'll save us a whole heap of explaining about this deal."

Nigger readily saw the logic of Red's argument. He replaced his gun, gingerly approached the cabin, and called out:

"Hello! Hello, in there! What you

think you're doin'? Pretty mess you've stirred up!"

The boy answered wildly:

"Git away—I'll chop you down! I'll hack you in pieces!"

"That's all right, kid, we won't hurt you. We're your friends. You're just a bit excited. Calm down, kid, and pass that ax out here 'fore you hurt some of us, and then we'll have some nice warm breakfast together, and by and by we'll pack up and drop down to Circle, and I'll go with you on the first up-river boat to Dawson and have your head fixed good and proper. Come on now, kid; we're cold and hungry—be a good sport and pass the ax out to me."

For an hour they coaxed and pleaded with him before the ax was passed out into Nigger's waiting hands. Then they burst through the door; crushed him to the floor; bound him hand and foot. He made no resistance; merely stared at them with his crazy eyes.

"Now for the gold and then out of here!" cried Nigger.

He rushed into the adjoining room, peeled the blankets from the head of Jim's bed and found nothing on the spruce bough mat beneath where the night before had lain five canvas bags of gold. Nor did a thorough search of the premises—every nook and corner of the two rooms, every square foot of the floor and the ground surrounding the cabin—produce either a trace of the missing gold or of the old man's amputated head and hands.

In a frenzy of rage Nigger bent over the prostrated Silver Skull where he lay on the floor with eyes shut as if sleeping.

"Where is it!" he roared. "Where's that gold!"

Receiving no answer he seized the boy's head in his hands and beat it up and down with resounding thumps on the hewed logs of the floor. "Come alive—speak up, you —— foxy killer, 'fore I smash your worthless head in!" Only the agonized screaming of his victim answered him. But he did not cease the abuse until Red and the Greek interposed and seized his arms.

"Lay off that, Nigger! No use beating his brains out!" Red argued. "Mebbe in a day or so his wits will return enough to tell. It's more'n likely that he chucked the gold and the old man's head and all in the river. And if he did we can get the gold when the water runs down again."

Nigger realized that for the time he was beaten. He straightened up cursing and complaining bitterly:

"It'll take a week for that water to lower. —— of a boat we're in—helpless as babies in the hands of this lunatic! —— if I ain't half a notion he's playing some sly game!"

The weather favored them by turning bitterly cold—the first heavy frost of approaching Winter. They buried the mangled remains of old Jim and spent the better part of four days in searching about the camp. At the end of that time the high water in the river had lowered to a point beyond which it would have been impossible for Silver Skull to have tossed the gold on the night of the murder. They searched over every exposed foot of the bar and found no sign of the treasure.

"It ain't here and never has been," Nigger declared; "in this slow current it never would have washed away. If he chucked anything in here it was the old man's head. The gold is cleverly cached and that crack-brained kid knows where!"

"I don't reckon he knows much of anything," Red observed dubiously.

Nigger maintained that the boy was not as crazy as he would have them think.

"Give me a free hand," he said, "and I'll jar some information out of him."

"He's too sick to stand any more mauling," Red objected; "for four days he's lain there on Jim's bunk like a dead man—ain't eaten a bite only what I've forced down him. I tell you we got to handle him mighty gentle or first thing we know he'll croak on us and the deal wil' be gummed good and proper."

Nigger shook his head and cursed bitterly.

"That's just part of the game he's playin'! And he's got you birds fooled. You lay off this now—let me work a little scheme of my own on him, and if it shows up that he has any sense we'll roast him to a cinder but what we make him tell where that gold is."

The big man outlined his plan and they returned to the cabin where, according to Nigger's directions, while preparing and eating their noon meal, they talked loud and exultingly about having found the gold, though very careful not to mention where. When the meal was finished Nigger went into the next room and after a moment of silent contemplation of Silver Skull who appeared to be fast asleep, he spoke in his softest, kindest tone:

"Poor kid, he's pretty much done up. Reckon we might as well cut him loose and let him circulate around a bit if he wants to while we're packin' up."

With his pocket-knife he cut the bonds that held the boy, and left the room.

"Come on," he ordered the other men, "let's go down and shove a boat in the water and get ready to clear out of here."

They shuffled from the room, and no sooner had the door closed behind them than Silver Skull was out of his bed and rushing toward the ax that leaned against the wall just inside the outer door. But the instant before his hands could close upon it the door burst open and the three men sprang upon him.

He screamed and struggled furiously, and finally with both arms pinioned in an unbreakable grasp, he vented his rage by a stream of oaths and imprecations, denouncing them as thieves and murderers, and vowing vengence if they took away the gold.

"Gold!" Nigger repeated triumphantly; "you do remember the gold, eh! And you're gonta tell us where it is!"

Instantly the boy ceased struggling and stood gaping at them, open-mouthed.

"You ain't got it then!" he finally gasped.

"No, but we will have —— soon. You are just as crazy as a fox! But your game is up. Now come across—where is it?"

"I don't remember."

Nigger's big fist smashed into the boy's face bringing a stream of blood from his nose and mouth.

"I'm through foolin' with you," he growled; "here's where we get down to business. Stretch him out, boys."

They threw him face down lengthwise on one of the log benches, and secured his hands and feet to the legs at either end. Nigger placed a fry-pan on the hot stove, and ripped the clothing from the boy's back. When the pan was hot he demanded curtly—

"Where's the gold?"

"I don't remember."

The pan came down upon the boy's bare shoulder. A frightful scream burst from his lips and smoke and the odor of burning flesh rose from beneath the iron.

Nigger raised the pan and asked again—

"Where is it?"

Only the screaming and the agonized writhing of the tortured body answered him. Twice more he heated the iron and pressed it on the boy's bare flesh before he groaned out the information that the gold was buried in Mike Smith's grave.

Nigger heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"——'s fire! that's the last place on earth I'd have looked!"

He replaced the pan on the stove and ordered Red and the Greek to hasten up to the grave and verify the boy's statement.

"And in the meantime," he added, "the iron will be good and hot again to roast out some information in case this proves to be a lie."

With pick and shovel the other men repaired to the grave, and a few minutes later at sound of their returning footsteps, Nigger called out—

"You find the gold?"

"Yes," Red answered solemnly as he pushed open the door, "and this, too."

In his extended hand he held a human head with his fingers clasped in a blood-matted, red-brown beard.

"Ah hah! the old man's noodle, too, eh!"

In the dim light of the cabin he did not notice that the hair and beard on the ghastly object were not of the iron-gray color that old Jim's was. Red corrected him.

"No, it's Mike Smith's head. This and both his hands with the stiff red hairs on their backs were in the grave beside the gold. And that 'pears to be 'bout all that's left of Mike."

Nigger received this news in dumb astonishment. And then in a flash came full realization of the trick that had been played upon them.

"We're jobbed!" he breathed hoarsely; "jobbed to a finish! Jim's alive—and headed cross-country for Circle. He's fooled us proper—he and this —— half-wit here!

In a sudden burst of insane rage he snatched up the fry-pan and would have brained the boy who, writhing and groaning weakly, still lay strapped to the bench, had not Red dropped the bloody head and sprang in front of him with doubled fists.

"Hold on, Nigger! You ain't gonta kill him for spite—you'll hang us all! Use your head now—our bluff ain't called yet. Jim's still a mighty long way from Circle.

We got the gold, a boat and plenty of grub. There's nothing to hinder us from being plumb safe a long way down the Yukon 'fore the marshal ever hears of this."

His words had the desired effect. Returning hope cooled Nigger's wrath and he threw down the pan.

"Come on then and let's skin out of here."

Leaving Silver Skull still strapped to the bench, they brought the gold to the cabin, shoved a boat into the water and began packing the supplies down to it.

Red and Nigger were rolling the bedding and stowing the kitchen utensils into a box when Murphy who had taken the last load of grub down to the boat returned at a run and in a wild state of excitement.

"Look! Look!" he squalled with frantic gestures toward the river; "one beeg boat—plenty da men! Look! queek! look!"

Nigger and Red rushed outside and looked. Near the lower end of the bar a huge birch-bark canoe propelled by a half-dozen paddles was moving swiftly upstream through the slow water close in shore.

"Indians stringin' a trap-line, no doubt. Mebbe they'll pass by," Red suggested hopefully.

But the canoe did not pass. Directly opposite the cabin the paddles rose from the water and it came to rest. A broad, squat figure in hooded caribou-coat and moccasins sprang ashore and pulled the bow of the canoe high up on the gravel. Five other figures in similar dress quickly followed, and cold fear stabbed at the hearts of the watchers when they saw the evening sunlight flash on a half-dozen rifle-barrels.

"Siwashes, all right," Nigger blustered; "where's my gun—I'll shoo 'em away in —— short order."

The strangers were advancing at a dog-trot across the bar when Nigger ran toward them down the hillside shouting and brandishing his gun.

"Move on! Move on, you birds! I won't have no —— Siwashes snoopin' round my camp!"

They stopped scarcely a hundred feet away and from the hood of a caribou coat old Jim's voice answered him:

"Drop that gun, Nigger."

The words struck his senses like the shock of a bullet. For an instant he stood paralyzed. Then whipping his gun on a level with his eye he fired six shots at the men below. At the first crack they flattened out on the ground and his lead droned over their heads. He turned and fled for the shelter of the cabin.

Old Jim spoke sharply to the man beside him.

"Get him, Jack." Chandelar Jack, famous hunter of moose, ground his elbows in the sand, cast a keen eye along the barrel of his high-powered rifle, and fired.

Nigger was turning the corner of the cabin when the little steel-jacketed messenger reached him. He plunged in a heap at the feet of his companions with blood welling up from a tiny hole in the back of his head and his face transformed to a mass of shattered bone and mangled flesh.

The Greek squealed with terror and scuttled into the cabin to hide beneath a bunk. Red stepped out with hands reaching for the sky and shouted:

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I pass!"

In a low voice he begged Murphy to release Silver Skull before Jim and his Indians reached the cabin, but the trembling Greek had scarcely crawled from his hiding-place when Jim was in the room and staring with horrified eyes at the evidence of the price that Silver Skull had paid to save his gold.

Choking with rage he turned upon the men who stood prisoners in the firm grasp of his Indians.

"Dirty curs!" he cried; "you —— rotten beasts! I thought at first you were merely dupes in Nigger's hands, and I might have let you go. But all —— couldn't convince me that you had no hand in this! I'll never let up on you! The pen—twenty years—the rest of your rotten lives behind prison bars is what this fiendish work will cost you!"

They freed Silver Skull and tenderly placed him upon a bunk where for a long time Jim knelt beside him with the boy mumbling over and over the pathetic apology:

"I couldn't forget! I couldn't forget! And they burned me and made me tell!"

And old Jim answering softly, consolingly:

"It's all right, boy, and you're my partner from this day on, and we're going away together—back to the States down there where your folks and my folks are waiting for us—and we'll hunt up the best doctors in the world and you'll be well again, boy, if it takes the last red cent of our Cassiar gold."

PORTO BELLO GOLD

A FIVE-PART STORY
PART II

by Arthur D Howden Smith

Author of "Swain's End," "Swain Jarl-Maker," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

I WAS in the counting-room talking with Peter Corlaer, the chief of our fur-traders, when the bond-boy, Darby McGraw, ran in.

"The Bristol packet is in, Master Robert," he cried. "And, oh, sir, the watermen do say there be a pirate ship off Sandy Hook!"

I went with the news to my father, whom I found in the company of Master Clinton, the Governor of the Colony of New York. They were great friends, despite the fact my father once had been a Jacobite. We reached them just as Captain Farraday, the master of the Bristol packet, was telling his story.

"Chased?" he cried to my father. "That I was, Master Ormerod, by the pirate frigate *Royal James*."

"That would be the vessel of the fellow known as Captain Rip-Rap," observed my father; and there was a quality in his voice and manner which led me to think that he labored in the grip of some strong emotion.

"True for you, Master Ormerod," answered Captain Farraday. "A complete rogue, but a man of exquisite dress and manners. And moreover as arrant a Jacobite as ever was. He works with John Flint, who is no less of a rascal, albeit rougher. Flint sails in the *Walrus*. Between them they ha' the metal to hammer a brace of King's ships."

Captain Farraday stopped for breath, and Governor Clinton seized the opportunity to ask with a smile:

"Captain Rip-Rap did you call your pursuer? What manner of name is this?"

"He is singularly partial to that mixture of snuff," answered Captain Farraday. "I am told his own men give him that name, for even they do not know that to which he was born. 'Tis said he was a gentleman who suffered for his political convictions."

Later, when we were alone in the counting-room—Peter, my father and I—they told me the secret they shared with Captain Rip-Rap. He was Andrew Murray, my mother's uncle.

"But," I cried, "he was the great trader who conducted the contraband trade with Canada. 'Twas he whom you and Corlaer and the Iroquois fought when you broke down the barriers of the Doom Trail and won back the fur-trade for our people. Why, 'twas then you—and——"

I knew the deep feeling my father still had for my long-dead mother, and I scrupled to stir his memories.

Next morning I took Darby with me to make a business call on Captain Farraday. As we walked along the water-front we saw a Spanish frigate and a battered little brig at anchor, the latter with a cannon-shot hole in her side. A one-legged sailor who said that he was off the latter vessel introduced himself as Long John Silver and told us a thrilling story of how the ship had been pursued by Rip-Rap. He was so ingratiating that I lent him Darby to guide him to his destination, the Whale's Head Tavern.

By the time I had finished my business on board the Bristol packet the afternoon was gone. I was on my way back to the counting-house when I was stopped by a group from the Spanish ship.

"Sir," said a young lady whom they were escorting, "can you direct me to the Whale's Head Tavern?"

She appeared to be the last sort of woman who might be expected to have anything to do with this noted resort of bad characters. Matters grew clearer when she explained that she sought her father, Colonel O'Donnell, a Jacobite exile in the service of Spain. I not only guided her to the tavern, but went inside to tell the colonel that his daughter awaited him. There I found Darby, with Long John and a couple of his cronies, known as Bill

Bones and Black Dog. The boy obviously was captivated by Long John's tales of the sea. Silver volunteered to find O'Donnell for me. He professed not to know the Irishman, but had no difficulty in locating him.

That evening after dinner we had a call from Captain Rip-Rap. He spoke of "launching the coup of his career," one which "will echo in thronerooms and chancelleries," and announced that I was his heir and that as such he wanted me to be his assistant. I refused to go. Immediately a gang of his men entered with Long John at their head. Darby McGraw, his head turned by Silver's alluring tales, had joined the pirates and as his first lawless act had let them into the house. As they trussed me up, Peter insisted on going too, and they obliged him—"your muscles should prove useful," observed my great-uncle, noting his tremendous strength.

The pirates rowed out to the brig and took us aboard. My great-uncle had a short conversation with O'Donnell regarding a Spanish ship, the *Santissima Trinidad*, the full purport of which I did not understand. I did gather, though, that there was a Jacobite plot afoot, as a detail to which O'Donnell and his daughter were to be taken off the Spaniard and become the guests of Murray on his pirate vessel. But how? Why? When? Where?

Well, O'Donnell went back at last to his Spanish frigate, and we put to sea. Once the pirates had us where we couldn't escape, our bonds were removed and Silver became his hypocritically unctuous and expansive self. Among other things I learned from him that the brig had been especially captured for this visit to New York; that its original crew of honest men had been murdered, and that as soon as we came up with the *Royal James* and the *Walrus*, this vessel was to be sunk and the prime ruffians who now temporarily manned it were to be retransferred to their original stations on the two pirate craft. Silver told me all this while acting as lookout for the helmsman, a horrible blind villian named Pew who steered by the feel of the wind in the sails.

As we three talked on, the sailing-master, Bill Bones, came along and picked a fight with Peter Corlaer. Seasick though he was, the huge Dutchman still had strength enough to take Bones' knife away from him and haul him over the halyard, where Peter proceeded to reeve a landsman's slipnoose. Bones was saved from being hanged by my great-uncle, who told him that another infraction of discipline would result in his being keel-hauled.

CHAPTER VI

TALL SHIPS AND LAWLESS MEN

THERE was a noticeable tightening of discipline after my great-uncle's admonition to Bones, and Peter and I were let severely alone, except by Silver, who, I think, found satisfaction in annoying the mate by the effusiveness of his cordiality to us. A second lookout was sent into the foretop, and the watch on deck were continually on the alert. But nothing untoward happened that day. The brig held on her course to the southeast, and the sea surrounded us with the immensity of its restless waters. One moment the land was a faint, hazy streak in the distance; the next it was gone.

My great-uncle paced the deck with measured strides throughout the afternoon, his head bent upon his chest, not a word for anybody. He ignored me as thoroughly as the members of the crew, who treated Silver and Bones with offhand familiarity, but scurried from his path if he came near them and were quick to bob their heads and tug at forelocks. When night came he supervised the hoisting of two lanthorns, red and green, one above the other, to the main truck; and he ate very little of the excellent meal which Silver cooked in the galley and Darby served us in the cabin. Nor, contrary to his usual mood as I had read it, was he inclined for conversation.

He returned immediately to the deck, leaving Peter and me to an exchange of casual remarks with the Irish boy before we went early to our stateroom, full sleepy with the heavy sea-air. Peter was almost himself again, although he dared eat but little and suffered qualms when the brig rolled much from the perpendicular. He was asleep as soon as he lay down, but I drowsed lightly for some hours, and all that time I could hear over my head the *tap-tap-tap* of footfalls in even cadence as my great-uncle strode from the stern railing to the cabin companionway and back again.

Yet when I went on deck in the morning it was to discover Murray there ahead of me, dressed with his customary immaculate precision, his face fresh and unfatigued. He stood astraddle close by the wheel, hands clasped behind him, his gaze fixed upon the tossing waters ahead. The wind had backed around several points during the night, so that we were making more difficult weather of it; and the easy, gliding motion of the previous day had been changed to a choppy roll.

Peter was not communicative; and as I was in no mood for Silver's hypocrisy or Darby's wild talk I strode up to my great-uncle.

"You seem perturbed," I said.

"I am," he returned frankly. "I have two problems upon my mind."

"Unfortunately I see no signs of pursuit," I answered.

He smiled.

"Nor will you, Nephew Robert. No, my problems are connected with the difficult task of attaining an imaginary spot in this trackless waste and puzzlement as to whether I have correctly estimated an equation of human values. You are not perhaps mathematical? Ah, too bad! There is no mental exercise so restful and diverting to the mind as algebra. But figures lack the warm interest of human equations. As, for instance, the exact degree of trust to be imposed in untrustworthy persons."

"Sail ho!" shouted the lookout in the main crosstrees.

Murray's calm face flushed with sudden emotion, and he took a step forward.

"Where does she lie?" he trumpeted through his clasped hands.

"Maybe one, two points to larboard, sir."

"Can you make her out?"

"Only tops'ls, sir; big 'uns."

"Let me know as soon as you make her," said Murray, and turned back to me.

But almost at once the other lookout in the foretop sang out—

"Second sail to larboard, sir, comin' up arter t'other chap!"

Murray rubbed his hands together with every evidence of satisfaction.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "It appears that my estimation of the safe degree of trust to be imposed in the given situation was within the bounds of accuracy."

"I don't understand you."

"No? In plain English let us say then that my own vessel and consort are meeting me according to plan."

"The sea is wide. How can you be sure 'tis they?"

"I can not. Yet the balance of probability is in my favor."

"Why do you speak of trust?" I challenged. "Can not you trust your own people?"

"I trust nobody farther than I must," he retorted.

And without another word he produced a patent folding spyglass from his pocket and clapped it to his eye. Silver, who had been an interested witness to the scene from his aerie atop of the cabin skylight, hopped across the deck to my great-uncle's side.

"Beggin' your pardon, captain," he said. "But I'd take oath that tops'l is the canvas you took out o' the Mogul's ship off Pondicherry. Mind it, sir? 'Twas uncommon bleached and looked whiter'n our cloth."

Murray handed him the glass.

"Stap me, Silver, but I believe you are right," he returned. "What a hawk's eye you must have! Here, see what you can make of it with this."

Long John peered through the glass, steadying his crutch against the butt of the mizzen.

"Aye, 'tis——"

"*R'yal James* to leeward!" hailed the foretop.

And the main crosstrees echoed, not to be outdone—

"*Walrus* comin' up astarn o' her!"

" 'Tis they, never a doubt," assented Silver as he lowered the glass. "Diggin' into it they are, too, and a lusty show o' canvas to both o' them. If you was to ask me now, captain, I'd say Flint isn't willing to plow your wake."

If there was a hint of an indicated threat in this remark Murray ignored it.

"Master Martin knows his ship," he answered, "as doth Captain Flint his. You lads are forever pondering why certain men rise to command. There lies the answer, Silver. 'Tis knowledge of how to handle your ship; aye, and to fight her, and to plan at need how not to fight her."

Silver knuckled his forehead, handing back the glass.

"Sure, sir, they all says a good captain is born and never made, and we be main fortunate as has two that can't be beat or took or harried from their ways."

My great-uncle indulged in a pinch of snuff, a mildly cynical smile upon his handsome features.

"I thank you," he acknowledged. "And now I would have the men tumble up their gear from below and make ready the boats. I shall also leave it to you, Silver, to lay the powder-train. How much have you?"

"Three casks, sir."

"Excellent. But allow us ample time to get free."

"Why do you give your orders to Silver and not to Bones?" I inquired curiously after the one-legged man had gone for'ard.

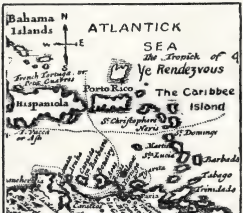
My great-uncle lowered his glass with a benevolent smile.

"I rejoice to perceive that you have an observant tendency," he commented. "Why do I single out Silver for orders? Ah! The reasons are quite obvious. To begin with, he is gifted with a personality which enables him to secure the accomplishment of tasks;

but perhaps as important as that consideration is the parallel fact that it lies to my interest to develop the seed of dissension in the *Walrus'* crew. The future contains infinite possibilities. Who knows what trifling factor may influence the dictates of fate?"

"They must be a strange crowd aboard the *Walrus*," I said.

"They are," assented my great-uncle. "In piracy, Robert, as in politics and business, he wins who plays the opposing factions against each other. I am, you may say, in a minority of one among some hundreds of headstrong, wilful, intemperate men. United, they would crush me like a fly on the wall. Divided, and kept divided, they are so many instruments for the fulfilling of my desires."



"How if I handed on your precept to them?" I gibed.

"They would not believe you. Their vanity would prohibit it. And even though they did, I would divide them upon the very point you raised."

The amazing ingenuity and fertility of resource of this heartless old rogue who was my relative began to compel me to a reluctant admiration of him. Perhaps some trace of this was revealed in my face, for his own eyes brightened and he dropped one hand lightly upon my coat sleeve.

"We shall yet come to an understanding, Robert. All is not so black as is painted. But my design is to induct you into the scope of my plans at one sitting, seeing that in such a manner I can most clearly present to you my reasons for requiring your assistance and the importance of the stake I play for."

"I know not of the blackness," I answered; "but I require no clearer understanding. Here on these decks have been murder and robbery, and in your ranks, if I mistake not, breed treachery and hate. 'Tis a sorry outlook. I would gladly be gone from it."

His face fell a little.

"Tut," he said. "We disposed of that before. Wait until we are aboard the *Royal James*, Robert. Then you will realize what I offer you."

"I have heard much of it already," I agreed dryly.

"Anon you shall hear all," he answered. "Let us get Flint across-table from us in the *James'* state cabin with a beaker of rum at his elbow. Then you shall hear me talk."

BONES came up to speak to him; and I rejoined Peter, who was glumly watching the unlashing of the small boats and the rigging of the falls by which they were slung overside.

"Now I get more sick again," he grunted.

"Cheer up," I told him. "You shall soon have a more substantial craft beneath you."

And I pointed to the two strange ships which had risen over the horizon line until the towering piles of their bellying sails were clearly visible. Like us, they rather quartered the wind; but they were of far heavier build, and they seemed to crash through seas that we were tossed over. While we watched, their upper works came into view, and I descried a long band of painted gunports on the leader's starboard side.

"She's a thirty-six, no less!" I exclaimed. "Can she be Murray's ship?"

"Whatefer she is, I be sick," rejoined Peter unhappily.

John Silver stumped up to where we leaned upon the larboard bulwarks.

"Sightly, ain't they?" he said. "Nothin' like a fine ship wi' canvas drawin' for a picture, is there?"

His face shone with what, I am persuaded, was entirely honest emotion.

"They are big as frigates," I answered. "How did your company come by such craft?"

He chuckled.

"I ha' heard tell the captain had the *James* from the Frenchies in some funny way. A Injyman she was—the *Esperance*. But Flint and a few o' us took the *Walrus* with our own hands on the Smyrna v'yage. She's better nor she was then, but she can't sail wi' the *James* yet."

"Is she as heavy armed as the *James*?" I asked, for the leading ship partly blanketed her from our view.

"Pierced the same, she is, Master Ormerod, and both has eighteen-pounder carronades below, but where the *Walrus* carries long twelves on the main deck, the *James* has long eighteens."

As Murray nodded dismissal to Bones, Silver left us and hopped up to him.

"All set and ready below, captain," he announced.

My great-uncle cast his eye at the approaching ships, now so near that we could make out quite distinctly the contour of their hulls, painted yellow, with a white band delimiting the ports, man-o'-war fashion. The *James* was already beginning to take in some of her top canvas.

"Very good, Silver," he answered. "Master Bones! You will bring the ship to and put over the boats."

There was a great flapping and banging as the brig rounded to, and with much yo-hohoing the boats were lowered into the water.

"You will go off first, Master Bones," ordered Murray. "Kindly present my compliments to Captain Flint and say that I should like to have a word with him aboard the *James* at his early convenience."

Bones sullenly touched his cap and led better than half the crew into one of the two longboats the brig had carried. Murray nodded to Silver as they cast off.

"Start your train," he said shortly. "Nephew Robert, I wish you and Peter to go into the second boat. At once, please!"

"Plenty o' time, captain," said Silver with a grin. "You can lay to it I'm a-goin' to give myself a chance to hop up from below."

The suspicion of a smile dawned in my great-uncle's eyes.

"It is barely possible that your disability is a factor in my arrangements," he answered.

Peter and I climbed clumsily down the ladder of cleats nailed to the brig's hull and dropped into the bobbing longboat. Peter groaned as we crawled over the thwarts.

"Like der waves is my stomach—oop—andt down. Now I be sick, *ja*!"

And he was.

Presently Murray descended the brig's side with an agility which put me to shame and took his seat in the stern sheets. Darby swarmed down like a monkey and ensconced himself beside us in the bow. Silver was slung over in the bight of a rope, and the last of the crew tumbled after him, one upon the other's heels. Oars were thrust out, and we pulled rapidly toward the *Royal James*, wallowing in the trough of the sea, a quarter-mile away. The *Walrus*, foaming up under a cloud of canvas, was almost as near, and on our weather board.

Darby crouched at my knees, drinking in the spectacle.

"Oh, the tall ships, Master Bob! Look to the water dripping from their bows, and the lordly way they stand up like the towers of churches or maybe a castle. Did ye ever see the beat of it? And the guns that are like to the grinning teeth in an ogre's head!"

Boom! The roar of an explosion behind us was as sharp as the smack of an open hand. I turned my head. So did the others. Murray was looking back, too, and the rowers rested on their oars.

A cloud of smoke jetted up from the brig's hatches. She heeled over to starboard as we watched, gave a quivering lurch and commenced to slide under by the head. We could hear the slap of the sails as they struck the waves. In two minutes she was gone.

"That was well-contrived, Silver," remarked my great-uncle. " 'Sdeath, but you are a man of parts. Give way, lads!"

He nodded the length of the boat to me.

"I trust you perceive the significance of that, Nephew Robert. A certain young man, we will say, disappears from New York. A certain brig disappears simultaneously. Some might go so far as to associates the two disappearances. Frigates put to sea in search of a certain brig—but the brig is no more."

The men at the oars laughed loudly, and I made no answer. What could I say? I felt very hopeless.

THE bulwarks of the *James* were lined with heads and faces as we pulled under her counter and made fast, and even at that distance the complexity of her crew was apparent. I saw Portuguese, Finns, Scandinavians, French and English cheek by jowl with negroes, Moors, Indians and slant-eyed yellow men. But what impressed me most was the absolute silence which greeted us, a silence all the more impressive because the wind carried to our ears the bedlam of shouts, cheers, oaths and imprecations with which the *Walrus* was receiving Bones' boat several hundred yards away.

Murray waved me to the ladder as he set foot on the first cleat.

"Up with you, nephew! Peter, also. The rest go to the *Walrus*."

Darby snatched at my hand as I rose.

"Whirra, whirra, but there's an ache in my heart to be parted from ye, Master Bob!" he cried. "And if we was to be pirates it do seem we might be together on the same ship!"

He made to follow me indeed, but Silver pulled him back.

"You stays wi' us, Darby," growled the one-legged man. "Blast ye, lad, you're our good luck. Flint'll douse the ship in rum after one look at ye."

"We'll meet again, Darby," I said. "Never you fear."

He dashed the tears from his eyes.

"Sure, there's never a fear in me heart," he denied. "But I'm all broke up from the parting with ye. God be good to us, and the blessed saints spread their wings over your head! I'm thinkin' you're like to need it more than me. Yes, yes, John, I'll be settin'; but——"

He was still jabbering in a mixture of grief and joy when I climbed over the bulwarks and dropped beside my great-uncle into the midst of another world.

Fore and aft from poop to fo'csle stretched the wide deck from which the lofty spars rose like forest giants. The massive bulwarks were shoulder-high, and inboard everything was painted red exactly as in a King's ship. The deck was remarkably clean and in order, ropes coiled, spare spars stowed and lashed, boats in their chocks, crates and other gear secured. A few cannon were lashed to their ringbolts, but the greater part of the battery was mounted on the lower deck under cover. The hundreds of men who had watched us from the bulwarks had all sifted for'ard. We stood in the midst of an open space, with only three others.

One of these three was a very small old man with wispy gray hair and deeply bronzed face, from which his eyes peered intensely blue and childishly simple. He had gold rings in his ears, and his dress was neat and plain.

"My sarvice, captain," he greeted Murray. "Ship's in order, I hope. —— my eyes if we've had so much as a ——— o' genuine wind since the ——— hussy bore away from ye off the Hook."

The effect of the unspeakable blasphemies which poured with mild intonation from his lips was ridiculous, but nobody appeared to notice it, and I learned afterward that his habit of swearing by the anatomy of the twelve apostles and various saints and sacred figures was the quaintest of several quaint characteristics of an unusual personality.

"We won't complain about that, Master Martin," replied my great-uncle. "I have brought back my grandnephew to be the mainstay of my old age. Here he is—Master Ormerod, Martin. Ah, and this is a friend of his and an old enemy of mine, Peter Corlaer," as Peter rolled over the top of the bulwark. "He is more to be reckoned with than you might suppose is Peter.

"Master Martin, Nephew Robert is my mate, and as such, my right hand and arm."

Martin stepped back, and the second of the three men confronting us touched his cap. This was a square, heavy-built fellow with a dour glint to his eye, who wore a decent blue cloth coat and small clothes.

"And here is Saunders, Master Martin's second," continued my great-uncle. "A Scot like myself. My nephew should make a fine Scotsman; eh, Saunders?"

"He's a braw-lookin' laddie in seemin'," Saunders agreed cautiously.

"Your meaning is that we must prove him?" responded Murray. "Quite true. We shall. Hola, Coupeau!"

And he rattled into a string of French which I could not follow as the third man met him with a bow and a scrape of one foot. Coupeau was as brutal in looks and manner as Black Dog or Bill Bones, but without the sinister implications of speech and action that made me shudder whenever the blind man Pew approached me or spoke in my hearing. He had been branded on the cheek, and an attempt to obliterate the brand—or perhaps 'twas the superimposed scar of a wound—had made that side of his face a very nightmare. His wrists and forearms showed gouges that wound upward like snakes and suggested what other torments his gaudy clothing concealed.

"Coupeau," remarked my great-uncle, turning again to me, "is our gunner. I saved him from the French galleys, and he is not without devotion to me, that quality of devotion tinged by self-interest which is to be preferred above all.

"And now we will go aft and prepare to receive Captain Flint. Master Martin, we shall probably lie here for several hours. Have all the tops manned and a vigilant watch maintained. I have every reason to suppose we need fear no intruders, but we must be on the edge of the cruising-course of the King's ships, and I'll take no risks."

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Martin. "We ha' not sighted a sail this twenty-four hours gone."

"And before?"

"A Philadelphia packet. Captain Flint made signal to chase; but I held off as you directed, and he turned back."

"You did well, Martin. I'll not forget. Conduct Captain Flint to us when he comes aboard."

CHAPTER VII

MURRAY'S PLAN

MURRAY led us to a door in the break of the poop which was opened for us by a stalwart black in a red livery coat, who ushered us along a companionway lined with stateroom doors into a spacious state cabin stretching the width of the stern. The walls were paneled in mahogany; silver sconces were fastened at intervals, and a wondrous luster chandelier was pendant from the ceiling, itself uncommonly lofty for shipboard; several paintings in the French school hung at the sides; and there were trophies of peculiar arms and armor. Underfoot were Eastern rugs, thick-piled and soft of hue. The furniture was of mahogany, and a service of massy plate appeared upon the table that was set under the range of windows which formed the rear wall of the room.

My great-uncle surveyed this magnificence with pardonable pride. 'Twas evident it meant something to him.

"Diomede," he said to the negro, "where is Master Gunn?"

A high, piping voice answered him from the companionway.

"Coming, worshipful sir. Ben Gunn's a-coming. I jest stopped by the galley to fetch up your chocolate, a-sayin' to myself as the captain would be sharp-set account o' early business in the morning."

The man who followed the voice trotted in bearing a silver pitcher of steaming chocolate, Murray's favorite drink; aye, and food. He was a slender fellow, with a simple, open face, clad in plain black as became an upper servant. He stopped dead at sight of us.

"Set your tray on the table, Gunn," instructed my great-uncle. "This is my grandnephew, Master Ormerod, and his friend, Master Corlaer. They are to sail with us a while."

Gunn pulled his forelock and ducked.

"Sarvant, gentlemen," he acknowledged. "Allus glad to please, is Ben Gunn. Bound to oblige ye, gentlemen. You jest name your drinks, and I'll fetch 'em up from the wine-bins."

"Food as well, Gunn," said Murray. "And Captain Flint is coming aboard."

Ben Gunn cocked his head on one side.

"That means rum," he commented. "Plenty o' rum, says you. Jest leave it to Ben, captain."

He ducked and scraped again and skipped off into the companionway with a kind of wiggle like a self-conscious child.

"My steward," remarked my relative. "He will be at your disposal for anything you require, Robert—yours, too, friend Peter. You will find the negroes equally anxious to please."

"The man is a half-wit, is he not?" I asked.

"A natural, yes," assented Murray, tasting the chocolate.

"I should think it would be dangerous to have one so simple in such close proximity."

My great-uncle smiled.

"You are quite, quite wrong, my boy. It is for the very reason that the man is incapable of spying that I use him. He is more valuable for my purposes than the most intelligent member of the crew."

He broke off.

"This chocolate is by no means so well brewed as Silver's. An extraordinary fellow, that, monstrously clever—exactly the sort of man, Robert, I never permit to remain near me. Indeed, if you possess the patience and the interest to analyze the composition of my officers and crew you will observe, I believe, that there is not an independently clever man amongst them. Aye, and if you find me a clever man aboard the *Royal James*—yourself and friend Peter excepted, of course—I will thank you to point him out to me, and I will straightway make a present of him to Flint, who must have half a dozen in the *Walrus*' crew who esteem themselves equally capable with him of commanding her."

"Yet the *James* was able to get along without you for several days," I remarked.

"Ah! A shrewd thrust! I am bound to admit, my dear Robert, that I regarded my recently concluded expedition as a dubious experiment. 'Twas in the light of reflections identical with those you have just detailed that I spoke of it as a problem in human equations. I was reasonably convinced that I could depend upon my men, but I should not have been greatly surprized had they abandoned me.

"I am not—by necessity I am not—regarded with affection by my followers. And on the whole, I think, I have gotten along better by means of fear than I might have by means of affection. Fear is a natural element in a pirate's career. What place has he in his life for affection?

"But we are faring far afield, Robert, into realms of philosophy in no way affiliated with our problems of the immediate moment. Hark! Do I not hear something?"

He did beyond question—an uproar of curses and shouts upon the deck outside.

"Perhaps your crew have decided to spring their revolt after your return instead of during your absence," I suggested.

He shook his head, smiling.

"No, no. It is only that Captain Flint has come aboard. Pray take your seats. I promise you an interesting episode."

The door to the deck banged open, and a harsh, domineering voice bellowed in the companionway.

"—— me, Martin, what the —— —— —— —— d'ye think ye are? By the —— —— —— ——, ye lousy, slack-bellied swab, ye made us——"

"Stow that, ye —— —— —— apology for a —— —— —— ——," interrupted Martin mildly from the deck. "Why, any —— —— would ha' had more sense than you!"

"Like ——! I'm my own master, I am. I——"

"Ye may be when ye stand on the *Walrus*' deck, but here you're only another —— —— —— as doesn't know better'n to veer after——"

"Belay for a —— —— lackey, ye slab-faced chunk o' rotted sea-horse! I'll talk to your master!"

Slam went the door, and a mutter of curses rumbled from the companionway, preceding a tall, blue-jowled man in a flaming red coat all cobwebbed over with gold lace. He halted in the cabin entrance, hands on his hips, feet planted wide, close-set green eyes flickering balefully on either side of a long nose that seemed to poke out from a tangle of lank, black hair.

* * *

"BACK, eh, Murray?" he snarled. "Two men the richer for your effort. Gut me, 'twas a fool's errand!"

"Pardon me," objected Murray, "but I am considerably more than 'two men the richer' in consequence of my run ashore—although I would not appear by these words to deprecate the importance to be attached to the acquisition of my grandnephew and Master Corlaer. Permit me, Captain Flint! Master Ormerod, my grandnephew, and Peter Corlaer."

And to me, aside:

"I fear these introductions must become boring. We shall require no more."

Flint scowled at us, flinging himself into a chair at the opposite end of the table from my greatuncle.

"A youth and a fat man!" he ejaculated. "And unwilling at that, so Bones tells me."

"Master Bones was correct in that statement," my great-uncle assented cheerfully; "but I fancy he neglected to add that the 'fat man' took his knife away from him and must have hanged him had I not intervened."

An appreciable degree of respect dawned in Flint's eyes.

"He is no butter-tub if he bested Bill," conceded the *Walrus*' captain. "Curse me though if I see why you should add a cub to your crew."

"Tut, tut, captain," remonstrated Murray. " 'A cub!' Think again. The boy is my heir."

"All he'll fall heir to will be the rope that hung you," returned Flint. "But I'll own I did you wrong when I accused you of being but two men the better by your shore expedition. I was forgetting the red-headed mascot John Silver fetched aboard. 'Tis the first promise o' luck we ha' had! I'd never have lost that Philadelphia packet t' other day with him aboard."

"I believe I overheard something of a dispute with Martin on that point," commented my great-uncle dryly. "He obeyed my orders in calling you off, and you broke our agreement when you would have given chase."

"And why not?" roared Flint. "A —— —— fool agreement, if you broach it now! A —— —— of a —— —— piece of —— —— —— idiocy! Curse me for a lubber if I see the sense in letting a fat prize slip through our fingers. And so I told Martin. Let me have him on my deck, and I'd use my hanger to him."

My uncle took snuff with much delicacy and rang a silver bell in front of him.

"Gunn is late with the liquor. I must ask your indulgence, captain, for compelling you to talk dry. But as to Martin and the prize. Indeed you wrong the good fellow. As I have already said, he did no more than carry out my orders, and while you may experience difficulty in comprehending my reasons for stipulating that no prizes were to be taken in my absence, I am so vain as to suppose that a few moments' conversation will clear all doubts from your mind."

Ben Gunn bustled into the cabin in the course of this harangue and desposited a trayful of decanters, bottles and flasks before us. Captain Flint without awaiting an invitation, seized upon an earthen receptacle labeled, "Gedney's Jamaican Rum," pried out the cork with the point of a knife, tilted it to his mouth and drained a mighty dram. Then he set it down beside him, wiped his mouth on his coat-cuff and cleared his throat.

"Humph," he growled. "I'm listening."

My uncle looked distressed.

"Gunn," he said, "how often have I asked you to supply Captain Flint with a goblet, beaker or some other drinking-utensil?"

The steward wiggled abjectly and pulled his forelock.

"Oft and often you has, captain, but 'taint no manner o' use—leastways not the fust time. Captain Flint says as how he always has to take the flavor of a new flask straight from the neck."

"And so I do," agreed Flint. "Rum don't taste the same in a cup. Ye drink coffee or tea in a cup—but rum! —— my eyes if I ever see so much fuss over drink and victuals as you make. But anything to oblige, Murray. I don't ha' to eat with ye every day, thank ——!"

Gunn produced a large silver goblet from a wall-cupboard, and Flint straightway filled it to the brim. I pushed a cut-glass carafe of water toward him, supposing he would wish some dilution, and he laughed jarringly.

"You ha' much to learn, my lad," he jeered. "We don't spoil good rum wi' water aboard the *Walrus*. There's a cask broached this minute on the spar-deck, and all hands fillin' their pannikins as fast as they can empty 'em, wi' red-headed Darby astride the butt for luck."

"Which means you will be in no condition to make sail a few hours hence," deplored my great-uncle, wagging his head. "'Tis foolishness, Flint. This rum-swigging will yet prove the undoing of you and every man of your crew. I am no upholder of imaginary virtues, as you know, but unbridled indulgence must ultimately defeat its own ends."

"Look to your ship, and I'll look to mine," snapped Flint, quaffing a wineglassful of the goblet's contents.

My uncle stared him straight in the eye with a hard, direct thrust of power which stirred my unwilling admiration.

"To whom do you owe your present position?" he asked coldly.

Flint made a patent attempt to stare him down, but abandoned the effort and looked away.

"Some might say one thing and some another," he muttered.

"To whom do you owe your present position, Flint?" repeated Murray.

"Oh, to you, most like," admitted Flint. "Blast you!"

"Have I ever led you into difficulties?" continued my great-uncle.

"Not if——"

"Have I ever led you into difficulties?"

"No."

"Have we failed in any important venture since our association began?"

"Not yet," admitted Flint sourly.

"Very well. Now I ask you: When I promise a certain accomplishment am I to be relied upon?"

"You ha' a head on your shoulders," conceded Flint.

"And you have not," amended Murray. "No, do not say any more. You are an excellent man to handle your ship, Flint, and as fearless as any of our ruffians; but you are no more capable of looking ahead a week or two than Ben Gunn."

"I take much from ye, Murray," snarled Flint, half-rising; "but think not ye can humble me before——"

"Sit down," ordered Murray. "You'll take what you deserve, which in this instance is a plain statement that you would ha' made a fool of yourself by chasing the Philadelphia packet. I doubt if you could have taken her, for your bottom is foul; but if you had, her loss must have aroused comment, and with New York already apprised that we are in these seas we should ha' had every frigate on the North American and West Indian stations a-hunting us. And what then?"

"We could lie up safe enough at the Rendeyvoo."

"Spyglass Island? I dare say—although some day 'twill be blundered upon, if not discovered. But I ask you to recall that we take no prizes when we hole up. 'Tis a losing game."

"Well, what would you?" Flint flung at him with an air of defiance, which Murray ignored.

"I would make the greatest coup we have attempted."

Flint laughed disagreeably.

"So you said when you arranged to go into New York, but you have carried back no treasure with you."

My uncle regarded him with what under other circumstances I should describe as honest indignation.

"You fool!" he said with a rasp in his voice—and I did not wonder that Flint paled under his blue jowls and pulled sidewise in his chair as if to avoid a stab. "Did you think I was to go into that huddle of a town with its wealth in furs and groceries, and fetch out a treasure?"

"What, then?" demanded Flint, moistening his lips.

My uncle leaned forward across the table, lips drawn tight over his teeth. His eyes shot sparks.

"Knowledge, fool! Intelligence! That which wise men labor a lifetime to secure and the ignorant pass by in the gutter."

"It may be knowledge to you," protested Flint childishly; "but how'm I to know of it as never heard it?"

Murray rose from the table and commenced to stroll the length of the cabin, hands clasped under the skirts of his coat. And as he strolled he talked. Flint followed his every move uneasily, with occasional drafts of rum. Peter and I watched the two of them, fascinated by this conflict of wills, which was to exert a vital influence upon our lives—yes, and upon those of hundreds of others.

* * *

"I MUST speak in simple terms, I perceive, Flint," began my great-uncle.

The passion was out of his voice, and the sentences trickled from his lips slowly, with an air of detachment.

"And that I may speak simply and present adequately an important subject, I must ask you to indulge me at length."

Flint nodded sullenly, seeing that an answer was required.

"We have frequently discussed the possibility of taking one of the Spanish treasure-ships," continued Murray. "But we have never attempted the project because we could not discover the date of sailing or the port wherein the treasure was embarked. It hath been the custom of the Spaniards in recent years—in fact, since the depredations of Morgan and his brethren—to shift arbitrarily the port of embarkation from year to year, as likewise to change the date of sailing. One year the port would be Cartagena, the next Chagres, the next Porto Bello, the next even Vera Cruz. They have been known to ship the year's produce of the mines around Cape Horn. And similarly the treasure ships, which used formerly to sail invariably in the Fall of the year, now depart whenever it pleases the fancy of the Council of the Indies to fix a date."

He paused, and Flint rasped—

"So much is known to all of us."

"I conceded as much," answered Murray smoothly. "What follows you do not know. When we returned from Madagascar——"

"'Twas against my advice," growled Flint. "Ye play too much wi' politics."

"With politics! Exactly," agreed my great-uncle. "Well, perhaps I do. 'Tis true that so far I have obtained trifling advantage from the sport, excluding one substantial fortune, this vessel we are in and the information which makes it possible for me to take this year's treasure-ship."

Flint sat erect. I caught my breath. Peter, too, showed a gleam of excitement in his little eyes that twinkled from behind the ramparts of flesh that masked his solemn face.

"—— me, Murray!" swore Flint. "Do you say that in sober earnest?"

"I do. Do you remember that we cruised off the Spanish coast last Spring and Fall, and that two months since I sent a periague into the Havana? During our Spanish cruises I established connections with a group of Jacobite gentlemen who know me and placed before them the outline of a plan, the acceptance of which they communicated to me in dispatches the periague fetched to Spyglass Island. In those dispatches I was notified to meet my principal confederate in New York on a certain date. I met him. The necessary arrangements were consummated, and it simply remains for us to execute the plan."

Flint clutched at his beaker of rum and emptied it shakily into his throat.

"How—how much?" he quavered.

"One million five hundred thousand pounds."

There was a moment of silence. The clean, golden sunlight flooded through the stern windows and dappled the polished surface of the table with darting molts and beams. Flint's jaw dropped on his chest. His green eyes glared. Peter and I were as dazed as himself. Only my great-uncle remained calm, pacing quietly up and down the carpeted deck, eyes fixed upon some vision of the future.

"All—that?" stammered Flint. " 'Sdeath! 'Twould be the greatest haul in our time, Murray."

"It is ours," affirmed Murray. "Upon terms."

"Terms?" echoed Flint. "What terms? Who can compel us to terms?"

My great-uncle came to a stop in front of him.

"My terms, let us say," he answered.

"Oh, aye," mumbled Flint. "But if 'tis there for the taking——"

"It will be there for the taking, as you put it, upon the terms I lay down," stated my great-uncle.

"But if ye know of yourself where it can be taken why must we bother wi' terms, Murray?" clamored Flint. "What's riches for us can be pared down to short cuts if it must be shared out right and left."

My great-uncle's laughter was wholly contemptuous.

"Observe, Robert," he appealed to me, "here was a man, who, a half-hour past, knew naught of this treasure we are discussing. It meant nothing to him. He never dreamed of obtaining it. And now that he has held out to him the possibility of looting a measure of it he waxes indignant lest that measure be too small!"

Flint refilled the beaker with rum.

The stuff seemed to heighten the uncanny blue pallor of his face, and the pupils of his eyes dwindled to pin-pricks, whether from the strong drink or excitement I can not say. But his manner was steadier than it had been.

"Why not?" he flared in reply to my relative's mockery. "If we take it, why not take all?"

"Because," retorted Murray with a burst of terrible energy, "I have passed my word as to the terms upon which the treasure is to be taken."

"What's your word?" rapped Flint.

For a moment I thought my great-uncle would strike him. He made to draw back his arm, and perspiration stood out in white beads upon his forehead. Flint feared it, too, but did not raise a hand to protect himself, charmed to immobility by the virulence of the basilisk's stare which Murray directed at him.

"It is my word," said Murray finally in a very soft voice. "No more, Flint. A poor thing, as the poet hath said, yet mine own! Also—that I may chime in harmony with your mental processes—it happens that my personal interests are bound up with the observance of these terms."

"I thought so," sneered Flint.

"Ah! Did you?"

My great-uncle's tones continued dulcet.

"It is a matter we will not discuss further, since it is beyond the range of your comprehension. I shall merely say that the terms are fixed, and that you will either accept or reject them."

"What are they?"

"As to division of the spoils? One hundred thousand pounds to myself as author and architect of the plan; seven hundred thousand to our two ships; and seven hundred thousand to my friends who cooperated with me to make it possible."

Flint brought his fist crashing down upon the table.

"I'll be —— if I accept!" he shouted. "What? Less than half to our company? And you sneaking off with a cool hundred thousand pounds in your pockets, and your friends, as like as not, splitting secretly with you!"

MY GREAT-UNCLE refreshed himself with snuff, contriving to invest the ceremony with an effect of distaste which I found amusing.

"Stap me, but you have a low mind!" he drawled. "Allow me to direct your attention to the fact that the plan amounts to my friends and I undertaking voluntarily to present you an opportunity to participate in the division of seven hundred thousand pounds, for which you will be called upon to do nothing except agree to follow out several stipulations I shall lay down."

"Let's hear 'em."

My great-uncle ticked off the items upon his finger-tips.

"First, 'tis highly desirable that we should lie low during the ensuing months. Activities such as we usually conduct would tend to affright the Council of the Indies and bring about a change in plan for the treasure-ship's sailing."

"What shall we do then?"

"My counsel is to bear up for Spyglass Island and careen there. Both ships are foul, and 'twill prove an excellent opportunity to make all clean and right."

Flint nodded.

"We shall need our speed against the Spaniard," he commented.

"*I* shall," returned my great-uncle with some emphasis. "This brings me to my second point. 'Tis advisable that we do not cruise in company for the treasure. I aim to intercept the *Santissima Trinidad* before she passes from the Caribbean into the Atlantic, and to that end I shall hover on a particular meridian awaiting secret intelligence notifying me when she puts forth from her port."

The blue look became intensified in Flint's face.

"You'd leave the *Walrus* behind?" he demanded.

"I must. Figure it for yourself," argued my relative. "Two tall ships plying the narrow seas, within easy sail of Jamaica and the Havana and Martinico! We should have the frigates after us in no time. My plan is to masquerade as a King's ship, running from any ugly customers who show themselves."

"Aye," said Flint. "And after you'd taken the treasure and stowed it all below hatches what thought would you give to us aboard the *Walrus*, eh? You'd be up and off, and we might whistle for our share."

"You wrong me, Captain Flint," replied my great-uncle simply.

But Flint gave an ugly laugh. It might be the rum or the stimulus of the debate or a gradual access of self-reliance; but he was no longer to be cowed by moral suasion. If I had doubted this, the sauve diplomacy with which my great-uncle proceeded to treat him must have convinced me to the contrary.

"If I wrong you, Murray, 'twould be the first time without valid cause," Flint rejoined. "Come, come! You must think of me better than that."

"I have thought of the best terms possible," answered Murray. "Mark me, 'twould be perfectly feasible for me to give you the slip any dark night, take the *Santissima Trinidad* by my lone and never account to you for a doubloon. I do not for two reasons: First, I have a feeling of common loyalty to you and your men; we have worked and fought together in the past, and I would give them their share in this haul. Second, I wish to use the Rendezvous in connection with the coup, and if you choose to look at it so, you can set down your inclusion as payment for that, as well as for your sacrificing chances at other prizes by keeping under cover."

"It won't wash," denied Flint. "What you say sounds well enough. It may be true. But I couldn't go back and report it to a fo'csle counsel on the *Walrus* and expect to have it believed. I have to blink myself when I think of it. ——!" He grinned evilly. "I know what I'd do in your shoes."

My great-uncle regarded him speculatively.

"What then is your answer?" Murray inquired.

"I don't play on those terms," returned Flint with decision. "Let me cruise with you, have a share in taking the prize, and I'll talk differently."

Murray shook his head.

"'Twould ruin the plan. I know you, Flint. 'Tis not in you to cruise for days and forego fat merchants that cross your bows, ripe to be plucked. The Philadelphia packet you were fuming over when you came in here is a case in point! Man, there'd be a dozen such chances while we awaited the Spaniard, and one of them you'd go for. No, I can't risk it. Alone, I can contrive not to attract attention. In company, we should stir up a hornet's nest."

"Curse me for a canting mugger then if I'll trade on it," snarled Flint. "I'll not trust you, Murray, and that's flat."

"Suppose that I gave you a hostage?" suggested my great-uncle tentatively.

"Hostage? Who could ye give me for hostage whose life would mean aught to you? No, no! Martin or any man you'd see with his throat cut, and never bat an eye."

My esteemed relative's shrug was as complete a repudiation of such a charge as might be desired. I enjoyed it with mixed feelings because I was beginning to see the writing upon the wall.

"I had not Martin in mind," he replied now; "but one whose life means to me more than my own."

"The man does not live," Flint swore roundly.

"He sits across the table," returned Murray. "My grandnephew and heir. I will go so far as to assert that the only reason I concern myself with this exploit is that I may secure estate and preferment for him."

Flint eyed him shrewdly, looked from him to me and from me to him.

"Your grandnephew, you say? Humph! Long John says you're choice o' him. Still— No, I like not your terms, Murray. They offer too little."

"They are the best I can offer," answered Murray definitely. "I will add, that there may be no misunderstandings, Flint, that the odd seven hundred thousand pounds goes to promote the interest of a cause, and not to line the pockets of Spanish officials, as you may suspect; and it is highly probable that considerable of my share will follow it."

The captain of the *Walrus* wiped a rum-spot from the table and tipped the earthen flask bottom up above his beaker.

"'Tis a heavy commission to pay," he said. "Eight hundred thousand pounds out of a million and a half."

"That or nothing," declared Murray.

"And I must lose how many months' cruising the while you wait for the treasure-ship?"

"Six or more."

"Gut me, but ye bargain like a Jew, Murray!"

"And like a Jew I pay well and surely, offering good security."

"I see it not," fended Flint, and drained the last of his rum.

"I pay seven hundred thousand pounds, to be divided share and share by the two ships' companies, and your company will incur no risk to win it."

Flint rose and settled his belt.

"I accept, for that I can do no better," he said. "But I must have the hostage. He's the weak point of it all; but I must take some chance, and curse me if seven hundred thousand pounds be not worth the gamble."

He snapped his finger toward me.

"Come on, my lad. We'll show you the life of real gentlemen adventurers aboard the *Walrus*."

"I'm no negro man to be bargained over and passed from owner to owner!" I exclaimed hotly. "You can make me go, but I'll not step willingly."

Flint was about to answer with a spurt of oaths when Murray interrupted.

"You anticipate matters," he rebuked his associate. "There is no occasion for a hostage yet. We shall sail at once for the Rendezvous. It will be weeks, aye, months, before I am in shape to sail west under Hispaniola. Time enough then to talk of delivering your hostage."

For an instant Flint appeared to be about to object to this view, but he evidently decided it was not worth another dispute.

"Let it go," he assented gruffly. "We'll settle the details at the island. —— me—" this with a sudden revival of friendliness—"I knew we had not picked up that red-headed lad for nothing! 'Tis a sure sign o' luck."

And out he swaggered from the cabin, stamping and banging the door and sprinkling curses freely as he gained the deck and shouted for his boat's crew to row him back to the *Walrus*.

CHAPTER VIII

A WICKED OLD MAN'S DREAM

MY GREAT-UNCLE sank into his chair with a gesture of disgust and poured three fingers of brandy into a wineglass.

"Phaugh!" he exclaimed. "At times I am nauseated by the company perforce I keep."

He rang the silver bell.

"Gunn," he said as the steward sidled in, "we are awaiting the food I ordered. But stay! Open a window before you go. This place reeks with the stench of decayed honor."

I laughed, and he put the glass from his lips, peering at me across its rim as if surprized.

"You find occasion for mirth in my remark, Robert?"

"I find myself in extraordinary agreement with you for the nonce," I returned. "You are correct. This place doth reek of 'decayed honor.' "

"Ah!"

He finished his drink, wiped his mouth carefully and set down the glass.

"You are, I suspect, attempting sarcasm," he continued. " 'Tis a diversion frequently favored by the young."

"No," I said; "I am only expressing to you my feeling that you have as little claim to possession of a sense of honor as the man who was just here."

Gunn unbolted one of the stern windows, and a fine breath of salty air was blown in our faces. Murray inhaled it deeply, and Peter, whose face had become leaden in the cabin's close atmosphere, regained a touch of color and edged forward in his seat. My great-uncle turned to him courteously, ignoring me for the moment.

"I fear you have been suffering from my thoughtlessness, friend Peter. Let me recommend a draft of this *aqua vitae.* 'Tis excellent for settling the stomach."

"*Ja*," nodded Peter.

"We shall presently have a chicken broiled over a slow fire," pursued Murray. "A few slices of the breast should be easy for your digestion and assist in the filling of the void which our rough fare on the brig was unable to satisfy.

"But Robert and I were discussing a question of honor. Pardon me if I return to it."

His large face, with its powerful, craggy features, glowed with the radiance of an intense personal conviction.

"What is honor? Or dishonor? Certes, here we have a call for close reasoning. No hasty generalities can dismiss so vexed a problem, which hath consumed the attention of gentlemen since gentility's institution."

"I should call it dishonorable to assure your grandnephew that you had kidnaped him for desire of his aid and to make his fortune, when actually you intended only to employ him as a hostage to further your personal schemes," I said deliberately.

And if I spoke restrainedly 'twas by no mean effort, for inwardly I seethed with resentment.

"The situation is susceptible to the interpretation which you place upon it," he admitted evenly. "Yet a reasonable temperament must concede 'twas necessary for me to place the consummation of my project before the claims of kinship. And though you appear not to be disposed to accept my assertions for fact, I will say once and for all that my intentions toward you are benevolent and affectionate—and this despite the contumely you have heaped upon me with no regard for the disparity of our ages."

I was nonplused, but dissatisfied.

"If that were my only count against your honor—if, indeed, a pirate can have honor——"

"And why not?" says he sharply. "I conceive of honor as the quality of being faithful to oneself, to the ethical standard one has established for this life we pass through so precariously."

"So that if a man practices dishonesty toward all save himself he preserves his honor!" I protested.

"Now do you twist my thoughts," replied my great-uncle. "And in the same breath you raise a complementary question: What is dishonesty—or honesty? As I have told you before, I take from those who have much, those who prey upon others. I am no more dishonest than that William of Normandy, who seized upon England and farmed it out to his barons in payment for their assistance."

"You are clever with words," I sneered; "but I'll not be fooled. What have you to say of your craft in deluding O'Donnell into risking his daughter aboard this treasure-ship? Do you call it honorable to persuade a foolish, unbalanced fellow to take an innocent young girl out of a convent, carry her half across the world, and then, to cloak a miserable conspiracy plunge her into the society of such scoundrels as Flint and yourself?"

Instead of losing his temper, as I had expected, my great-uncle stared at me very earnestly throughout this tongue-lashing. A speculative look came into his eyes.

"You have seen this maid, I believe," he said.

"I met her by accident. 'Twas I saved her from walking into the Whale's Head after her father."

"You did well," he approved warmly. "And you spoke to her? Prithee, Robert, what manner of maid is she?"

"Oh, fair enough," I answered, wondering what he was driving at.

"And well-spoken?" he pressed. "I have never encountered her."

"She has the Irish way of speech."

"But is she nice in her ways? A lady?"

"Yes."

Ben Gunn fetched in the chicken upon a salver, and my great-uncle busied himself in carving. 'Twas comical to see how Peter's stolid face lighted up. As he carved Murray talked.

"She should be an exquisite chit, Robert. She has good blood in her. Her mother was a younger sister of the Duke of Leitrim, and her father's father was a younger son of Lord Donegal. She will be much to the fore when King James returns to Whitehall."

"If he does!" I jeered. "I marvel that you should use so hardly a maid of such birth."

"Hardly?" He looked up from his carving. "Why do you say that?"

"Oh, an end to your shabby deceits and subterfuge!" I shouted. "I ha' told you already I know she is to be dragged aboard your ship when you take the *Santissima Trinidad*. What good will the Dukes of Leitrim and Lord Donegal and Jamey Stuart and all their string of Popish knaves be to her then? Bah! I could stomach your treatment of me, Murray. But to expose a slip of a girl, scarce more than a child, to life on this floating —— and the attentions of Flint and his lambs!"

My great-uncle pursed his lips.

"What a vehement youth! Friend Peter, I trust that chicken is done to your taste?"

"*Ja*," grunted Peter, plying a ready knife and fork.

"Will a thigh be satisfactory, Robert? This dish contains potatoes which were fresh when we started our voyage and should be so still. Serve Master Ormerod, Gunn. So! We will resume our debate.

"As to the maid's inclusion in our scheme, 'twas manifestly of the chiefest importance that Colonel O'Donnell's connection with me be not suspected. And the best way to cloak that was to have his daughter accompany him. Not even a Spanish official—than which there is no more suspicious breed—can carp at O'Donnell's movements whilst she is with him."

"But why?" I persisted. "Why all this devious deceit? Why mix a young maid in an unsavory intrigue? Why make her father disloyal to his master?"

Murray flushed crimson.

"He is not disloyal to his master," he replied with his first show of anger. "Colonel O'Donnell's master, my master—aye, your master—is King James! What doth O'Donnel care for the paltry Spaniard who sits in the palace at Madrid? What do any of us care for the Spaniards, who have not been men enough to live up to their declarations of support of the Stuarts? Why, this girl you mouth about would cheerfully suffer death, dishonor, any torment, to win for her king the means of power we shall afford him. And this treasure, which the Spaniards have wrung from the lands they stole from the poor Indians, we wring from them as remorselessly that we may apply it to a purpose infinitely higher than the placating of royal favorites and mistresses, which is the way 'twould go in Madrid. An unsavory business, forsooth! Boy, are you a fool?"

There was that about his rage which benumbed my own and awakened again the reluctant admiration which puzzled and embarrassed me. What was it my father had said of him?

"He is sincere in a queer, twisted way."

Past doubt, he was. I sensed a warped nobility of mind which stirred me to sympathy and pity. I felt of a sudden as if our places had been reversed, as if his white hairs were mine, and his my unlined face.

"Perhaps I am a fool," I said. "Yet if I know nothing of your plan and so am inclined to misconstrue it, whose fault is that?"

He dropped knife and fork and fixed me with his eyes, so marvelously alive and bright in their setting of crow's feet and wrinkles, so luminous with youth.

"Those are the first words you have spoken which have had any tinge of kindness to them," he answered.

"I am not kind," I denied; "but curious. You have torn me out of my natural course and thrown me into a network of intrigue of which I know nothing. You would have me think well of you and work with you, but you have not taken the ordinary pains to acquaint me with your purposes and the part you have designed for me."

Peter sat back with a sigh of content, his plate empty.

"*Ja*, Murray, you don't say much," he said in his squeaky voice. "You don't tell dot feller Flint so much as wouldt gife him der trail."

I had not observed this, and I felt secretly ashamed. My great-uncle smiled.

"Stap me, but I might ha' known you would see it, Peter!" he exclaimed. "Now, tell me: Why did not Flint ask me the treasure-ship's course and port o' sailing? Did he not think to in his fuddlement with the rum? Or did he know I would not tell him and reckon to save his tongue?"

"He knows you, *ja*," answered Peter.

Murray nodded.

"Yes, that would be it, and it took you to see it. You have not lived with the red Indians for naught, Peter. But this doth not answer Nephew Robert's question. 'Tis my fault you are so far ignorant, Robert, and I will endeavor to repair the error. I did not seek to delude you when I told you I carried you from New York because I needed your assistance, and that is so far true that I admit without hesitation I must have your help before I can achieve aught of my future plans for bettering your station in life. In fine, Robert, I need you at this time being more than you can need me; and your hostageship with Flint is but the least of the services I hope from you."

"That is frank," I replied. "And I will match it. I have told you I'll not help in piracy; nor will I. The taking of this treasure-ship is——"

"Bide, bide," he interrupted. "Before you commit yourself further let me tell my story. I ask only your promise to hold it secret from all men on these two ships."

"I'll promise that," I said.

"*Ja*," assented Peter.

"So be it."

He left the table and took from a cupboard in the wall a rolled map which he spread upon the table between us, shoving aside the plates and glasses to make room for it. I saw at a glance 'twas a chart of the Caribbean Sea and the Spanish Main and the islands which stretched from the tip of the Floridas to the Brazils.

"This is for reference," he remarked. "My story begins in Europe, and we require no map for that. Your father, Robert, was a stout Jacobite at your age. He has since changed his convictions; but we'll say nothing of that. I, on the contrary, was born a Jacobite and am one still, heart and soul. I shall never rest until the Hanoverian usurper has been displaced.

"I was on the other side of Africa when I first had word Prince Charles had raised the White Cockade in Scotland in the '45. I sailed for home, as you have heard, and was many months too late to be of service. But I established touch with friends in France who work for the cause, and so learned that the good work was going merrily on. We all know now that Prince Charles might have remedied his plight after Culloden had he been more fortunate in his advisers. I will tell you beyond that that the disarming measures in the Highlands have been a failure and the clans have only turned sullen from the oppression they have received. All that is wanted for another rising is money—gold!"

His luminous, dark eyes looked from one to the other of us, and I thought the tawny flecks in the pupils increased in brilliancy as he cried out that last word on a rising note that thrilled and disturbed me.

"Gold!" he said over again. "Why, there is one little hoard of treasure Prince Charles had to leave behind him—the Loch Arkaig treasure they call it. Cluny MacPherson and Locheil's brother have had the keeping of it, and you'd scarce believe the source of trouble it has been to the English! And it not more than forty thousand louis at the beginning, and dribbling fast before it was turned to account. It has set all the Highlands by the ears—forty thousand louis, spent by fives and tens, a good bit of it going to feed gillies in the heather or gambled away in some *clachan* of the Cameron country, if what I hear be right.

"Think what a real treasure would accomplish! Think what— But I am going too fast."

He paused, and a slow, strange smile shadowed his face as he drew a finger across the map upon the table.

"I said I would tell you a story," he went on. "But after all 'tis only a dream—a wicked old man's dream, Robert. 'Tis so you think of me, I know—and your father —and Peter there—and—I wonder what the little maid you spoke with would think! Or the poor, throneless old king who huddles over his brazier for warmth in the dreary palace in Rome that is all he has left of his majesty! Or Bonnie Prince Charlie, who flits back and forth from France to the Low Countries, scheming and plotting and always curbed for lack of—gold!

"Gold! We stumble for lack of it in every enterprise. With sufficient of it you can upset kingdoms, buy pardons, obtain patents and honors and place. 'Tis a definite substance, mark you, hard and shining and heavy in the hand—not such thistle-down as dreams are made o'.

"But the virtue of dreams, Robert—" he addressed himself direct to me, seeming to forget that Peter was present—"is that they can be trasmuted into that which is palpable and finite, aye, even into gold. And the dreams of a wicked old man may become as efficacious to right wrong or to throw down the mighty or to redeem the weak and the persecuted as the gold which Indian slaves mine under the whip of Spanish masters. For the dream may lead to the gold. What is the ancient saw? 'First the thought, then the deed.'

"When was the thought born? I can not say. Flint and I had often sought the yearly treasure-ship, but never had sight of her. Then one day the idea came to me to utilize my Jacobite friends in France and Spain. They leaped at the suggestion, for to say truth, Robert, both Spaniards and Frenchmen have treated our party shabbily. An intrigue was set afoot through the medium of a cardinal who is partial to King James, and so we gained access to the Council of the Indies. A bribe, which I supplied, procured for O'Donnell, already an officer on the regular establishment of the Spanish forces, appointment as an inspector of fortifications of the ports on the Main. And with the prestige of this post and the assistance of our friend the cardinal 'twas easy for O'Donnell to secure complete information as to the Council's plans for the dispatch of this year's treasure-ship."

His forefinger explored the chart before us and came to rest upon a dot on the flank of the narrow neck of land which joins the two Americas.

"There is Porto Bello, which was the port of the old treasure galleons and discarded as such by the Spaniards after Morgan sacked it. But later they restored and strengthened the fortifications, although in the late war our Admiral Vernon carried it by surprize. At that time Cartagena was the treasure center, and when Vernon attempted it he was repulsed with loss. Two years since the Council of the Indies decided to resume sailings from Porto Bello, which is the most advantageously situated of all ports on the Main for the collection of the treasure.

"See! 'Tis about midway betwixt Mexico and Peru, and the mines of Veragua are at its back door. The treasures of the South Sea islands can be fetched by sea to Panama and thence carried overland by the *recoes*, the royal mule-trains which are the link betwixt Panama and the West Coast and the cities of the Main. The Peruvian treasures come by the same route. Those from Mexico are fetched south from La Vera Cruz by a ship under escort of the Garda Costas and transferred at Porto Bello to the ship for Spain, which puts forth about the beginning or middle of September.

"This is a strong ship and well manned, but the Spaniards have been taught by centuries of experience to accept no risk for her. Her identity is never known in advance, even to her captain. He sails from Cadiz for the Main under sealed orders which he doth not open until mid-Atlantic is passed, and these orders do but carry him to Porto Bello. There a strict embargo is laid upon him and his crew, and the port is rigidly closed the while the assembling of the treasure is under way. So soon as that is accomplished 'tis laded aboard him, and he sails in the night, the hour known to no more than the Governor and higher officers; and to make assurance surer the port is kept closed for two weeks additional."

"Then how shall you have word of her sailing?" I broke in, swept off my feet by the rush of this amazing narrative.

"That is O'Donnell's task. He will reach Porto Bello during the Summer and be so concerned for the state of the fortifications that he'll refuse to leave until he has put them in defensible condition."

My great-uncle gave me a chiding smile.

"You ha' been vastly concerned for the well-being of the maid his daughter, Robert—and I am bound to say your feeling is highly becoming—but you might better fret for her health in that —— hole at the most pestilent time o' year. I hope for her sake she will be sent away with the officers' ladies into one of the mountain retreats the Spaniards have erected for their refreshment."

"Better Porto Bello and pestilence than a pirate ship," I muttered angrily.

"You will harp upon that word," he answered sorrowfully. "I am yet far from converting you, I perceive. Well, well! To my story again.

"Whilst he is there he will receive dispatches from Spain summoning him home on urgent affairs. He will elect to embark upon the treasure-ship because she is large and commodious and likewise safe. And thanks to his position he will have accurate knowledge some days in advance of her sailing-date. When he has obtained this fact he will convey it secretly to one Diego Salvez, an agent I maintain in that port, as I maintain others in almost every place of importance along the coast of the Main and in the islands. Diego, by O'Donnell's help, will get out of the town and put to sea in a fast sloop he hath in a little river near where was the ancient town of Nombre de Dios, so that we shall have sure tidings of the *Santissima Trinidad's* coming and be prepared for her."

"But what of her course?" I scrutinized the map. "There are three several exits from the Caribbean into the Atlantic.

And I pointed to them in order: The Straits of Florida to the north of Cuba; the Windward Passage between Cuba and Hispaniola, with the great island of Jamaica lying to the westward of it; and last, the Mona Passage between Hispaniola and Porto Rico.

"She would never point up for the gaps between the lesser islands in the south," I added.

My great-uncle chuckled with a keenness of relish that was new to him.

"You read the chart well for a landsman, boy," he said. "What say you, Peter? Here is a stout sailor in the making."

"*Neen*," answered Peter earnestly. "You stick to der landt, Bob."

And for the first time my great-uncle and I laughed together, so comical was the Dutchman's repudiation of the sea and its folk.

"You have clapped on to the nub of our problem," said Murray. " 'Twas the piece of information I was at most pains to obtain. The *Santissima Trinidad* will head for the Mona Passage. I will show you why. The first aim of the Spaniards is to conceal her voyage; she sails a course which keeps her as much as possible in open seas. And the best exit for that purpose is the opening between Hispaniola and Porto Rico. There are no islands in the Caribbean on that course, and once through the passage she fetches south and east of the Bahamas and so beats up for the Cape Verdes.

"My intent is that the *Royal James* shall ply off the westerly mouth of the passage from about the end of August, avoiding all intercourse with shipping and keeping as far out to sea as is practicable. When Diego appears we will restrict the space of our beat, and 'twill be impossible for the treasure-ship to escape us. If she runs we can catch her, and at fighting I can take any don under a ship-o'-the-line."

"So much I heard you declare to Colonel O'Donnell aboard the brig," I said. "But what comes next? You take the *Santissima Trinidad*—and then?"

He moved his forefinger over the surface of the map and brought it to rest in front of a tiny outline sketched in ink on the expanse of sea east of Cuba and somewhat to the north of Hispaniola. Northward of this spot stretched the far-flung myriads of the Bahamas.

"That is what you have heard Flint and me refer to as the Rendezvous and Spyglass Island," he answered. "It has other names, I believe. Some have called it Treasure Island, although I know of no treasure upon it. In truth, its one value is that it doth not appear upon any map, and its comfortable isolation and sheltered havens supply an excellent resort for such outlaws as ourselves. 'Tis said that Kidd discovered it, and certes, others of the old-time buccaneers were wont to maintain themselves there. Flint had the secret of it from a tarry-breeks who claimed to have sailed on the *Adventure* galley. We are bound thither now to refit and careen, and when we have the treasure safe under hatches we will return to the island to divide it and concert arrangements for delivering their share to Colonel O'Donnell's friends."

"What will Flint say to your fetching in strangers to your hiding-place?" I asked.

A furrow deepened betwixt my great-uncle's lambent eyes.

"He'll not like it, Robert," he admitted. "I have O'Donnell's word to betray none of our secrets, and indeed 'tis to his own interest to keep hidden his part in this affair; but Flint may well make trouble. 'Tis a determined dog, and a greedy. Look you, boy, will you stand by me in the affair? For the girl's sake, if for no other reason?"

"Why not leave her aboard the treasure-ship?"

He regarded me askance.

"It may be we must sink——"

I started up.

"Now that I'll ha' naught to do with! I ha' told you I'd not fight if you butchered the defenseless."

He waved me back.

"Peace, peace! We can not carry off all the Spaniards in any case, and——"

He hesitated.

"—O'Donnell must be protected," he concluded.

"Against what?"

"Wagging tongues. I tell you his part must never be known. The *Santissima Trinidad* disappears, and with her the treasure and all her company. There's no other way."

"But if O'Donnell and his daughter survive to reach Europe there must be talk," I pointed out.

"True," he agreed; "but they will have their story ready. A shipwreck perhaps, and they alone contriving to reach shore."

"Who beliefes dot?" Peter interjected contemptuously.

"What else can we do?" countered Murray.

"Take the treasure if you must," I retorted; "but do not stain your hands with the blood of men who have not harmed you."

"I must slay some of them in all probability," returned my great-uncle. "What difference between that and slaying all?"

I remembered the thrill of reprobation with which even the most devoted adherents of King George had heard of the butchery of the Scots wounded after Culloden.

" 'Tis not yourself alone must bear the disgrace of such a deed," I tried again. " 'Twill attach an irremovable stigma to your cause. No honest Jacobite can ever afterward call Cumberland butcher. Aye, and if I know aught of Mistress O'Donnell she will refuse to have anything to do with so horrible a crime. Be sure 'twill bring a trail of ill-luck will swamp the Pretender and all his train."

He took snuff with his accustomed fastidiousness.

"Your arguments carry weight, I am bound to admit," he said, returning the box to his pocket. "What alternative have you to suggest?"

"Cripple the ship to give you time to escape."

"That's well enough," he argued; "but you take no thought to Colonel O'Donnell's plight. What will be said of him after he is brought aboard the *James?*"

The idea which came to me then I put away as distasteful, but rack my brain as I would I could produce no substitute for it.

"There's but one thing to do," I said. "You must make pretense of bearing off the daughter, and you can imprison the father too in order to silence his objections."

"A fit rôle for a pirate captain," mused my great-uncle. "El Capitán Rrrip-Rrrap and how he devoured the virgin! I can hear the stories that will be told in the Havana wine-shops. But I must have my price, Robert. If I spare such Spaniards as escape our great guns and the boarding-cutlases, will you agree to stand back of me in the division of the spoils with Flint?"

"I'll not become lieutenant in your piracies, if that be your meaning," I returned.

"No; my meaning is plain, boy. I wish you and Peter to help me to get clear of Flint with the O'Donnells and their portion of the treasure."

"But why return to the Rendezvous at all? Bear off with the O'Donnells and land them and their treasure before you deliver Flint his share."

My great-uncle shook his head.

" 'Tis not so simple as all that. The action with the *Santissima Trinidad* will require cannonading, and that will be heard.

Probably we shall be seen sailing away. We may be pursued. The surviving Spaniards, whom you will have me spare, will speedily have out their frigates after us. We must remain under cover for a period. And finally, for various reasons too complex for discussion, I can not make delivery of the treasure to my friends in France before the Spring. Seven hundred thousand pounds in gold and silver bullion is no easy mass to handle. Preparations must be made for its landing and transportation.

"No, Robert, the Rendezvous is necessary to my plans. Furthermore, I am surprized that you, who prate—I am correct, I believe, in the word which seems to appeal to you?—so much of honor should seek to encourage me to act dishonorably toward my associates by withholding from them, for however short a time, their just share of our spoils. You will grant me, I hope, the credit of being at least an honorable pirate."

He spoke at the last with a kind of mincing solemnity which was vastly funny, and both Peter and I fell a-laughing for it. Read me for a fool or a knave if you will, but I protest I was conscious of a growing inclination for my relative. So whimsical a scoundrel could not be altogether without redeeming qualities; and sure, his courage and resource by themselves were sufficient to set him apart from ordinary men.

"Very well," I said. "I will do what you ask for the maid's sake—if Peter is willing."

"*Ja*," assented Peter.

Murray caught my hand in a quick, firm clasp.

"Good!" he cried. " 'Twill be the first o' many times we stand shoulder to shoulder. Ah, Robert, I ha' dreamed a splendid dream, and any man who helps in its achievement will not have lived in vain. We'll take this gold and build an avenue of victories for the king's ride to Whitehall. What will we not do? We'll rouse the claymores from the hills! We'll carry the Irish Brigade to London town! We'll fetch home the Wild Geese from their haunts of exile! We'll ha' the beacon fires ablaze from end to end of the Three Kingdoms! And the White Cockade over all!

"There'll be no talk of pirates then! 'Twill be my Lord Duke of Jedburgh, Marquis of Cobbielaw and Earl and Baron Broomfield; aye, and an English peerage to boot. We'll ride high, Robert—aye, with the highest!"

He broke off short, and the glow in his eyes charred out.

" 'Tis not a bad vision for a wicked old man to dream; eh, boy? Remember it when you hear the crowds a-cheering us in the Strand."

Almost he made me believe him, this outlaw of the sea. But Peter broke the spell.

"Me, I don't beliefe in dreams," yawned the Dutchman. "*Neen.*"

Murray glared at him.

"What you believe is of little account, Corlaer," he said curtly, and strode from the cabin.

Peter took a sip of *aqua vitæ*.

"He is a great dreamer, Murray," he squeaked. "*Ja*, all der time he dreams. He dreamed when we fight wit' him before, me andt your *vater*, Bob. It is not goodt to dream too much, *neen*."

He sighed.

"My stomach is better. We finish der chicken, *ja?*"

CHAPTER IX

THE ISLAND

ONE day was like another aboard the *Royal James*, although to a landsman the routine of duties, work and varying weather was charged with unending interest. My great-uncle held his pack of wolves on a short leash and exacted from them all the efficiency of a man-o'-war's company. Indeed, he rather fancied himself in the status of admiral upon a private establishment, and occasionally indulged in visions of the *James* gazetted to the roster of the royal fleet and himself flying a broad pennant in a line-ship at the head of a squadron.

"His Majesty could scarce make me Lord Admiral, Robert," he would say, pacing the poop with hands clasped behind him and spyglass tucked beneath his left arm. "I am one for maintaining the rights of tradition, and the Howards have an inalienable claim to the place. But a regular commission—that would be vastly different. Admiral of the White, let us say—or if that grade be filled, perhaps of the Red. I understand there to be considerable jealousy amongst the sea-dogs of the Navy over the rankings on the White, and I am a reasonable man. Military or naval fitness must never be sacrified to political ends. 'Tis a canker will wreck the most powerful State in time."

Each morning he inspected the ship from stem to stern, accompanied by his officers, and he was not slow to administer rebukes for shortcomings or oversights. Later in the forenoon the men were exercised at the great guns, and in the afternoon there was pike and cutlas drill. The watch was rigorously maintained. We carried lookouts day and night at all three mast-heads and on poop and fo'csle, and every one of them was equipped with an observation glass. The handling of the sails was astonishingly smart to me, who, of course, had had no previous experience to go by.

The cleanliness of the decks and living-quarters was beyond any peradventure of criticism. Even the men of the crew—as choice a collection of hangman's favorites, jail-breakers, road-wanderers, hedge thieves, pickpockets, murderers and mutineers as could have been mustered upon one deck—were kept personally tidy and clothed with a rough similarity in wide trousers of tough canvas, gaudy shirts of calico and round-jackets of Irish frieze.

There was plenty of food, and of far better quality than is served on King's ships as I have since learned, and enough rum to keep all hands in good humor without being drunk. None of this broaching a cask on the spar-deck according to Flint's habit, but a full pannikin three times a day. And in tropical waters, so Master Martin told me, Murray was at great pains to keep the ship stocked with fresh fruit to prevent the scurvy and the wasting fevers of the hot latitudes.

The officers lodged for'ard of the cabin in what answered, I suppose, for a gun-room. Murray had the poop quarters to himself, with only Peter and me for company, aside from Ben Gunn and the two negro lackeys, who were more for show than aught else, seeing that the steward did practically all the work.

With our accommodations I could find no cause for quarrel. My great-uncle had promised me I should fare like an admiral, and certes, like an admiral or a princeling did I fare. There was a stateroom each for Peter and me, and whilst constricted in space by shore standards, they were spacious beside the cubby-hole we had shared aboard the brig.

The main cabin I have already described, but I may add that in addition to its artistic decorations it possessed a well-chosen library of Latin, French, Italian, Spanish and British authors, including such recent works as our own Cadwallader Colden's "History of the Iroquois Nations," which my father esteemed a masterpiece of historical authority; Smollet's novels, several pamphlets and slim volumes dealing with the experiences of spirited gentlemen who had participated in the struggles of the '45; and a variety of philosophical studies and disquisitions upon political economy. Perceiving that I displayed some interest in it, my great-uncle commended to my attention Monsieur de Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws," Cervantes' "Don Quixote," the "Satyricon" of Petronius, Carte's monumental "Life of the Duke of Ormond" and Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion."

"There, Robert," he remarked of the last, "is an object-lesson in the success to which a man may attain by application, diplomacy and native genius. My Lord Clarendon began life as a commoner; yet he lived to see his daughter married to the brother of the King of England, and only by the obscure bafflements of fate was he prevented from beholding the offspring of her body occupying the holy eminence of the throne. I have derived much satisfaction from the contemplation of his success in moments when I might have despaired of the future's reward of my own efforts."

He was particular that I should be well garbed, and forced upon me several suits out of his abundant wardrobe which were given the necessary alterations by a former journeyman tailor who had escaped from Newgate on the eve of execution for the murder of a scolding wife. He would have done as much for Peter also; but the Dutchman refused to be parted from his salt-stained buckskin shirt and leggings; and an odd figure Corlaer made, in all conscience, striding the decks of the *Royal James* in the costume of a forest-runner, even to the knife and hatchet hung on either thigh.

We were fortunate in our weather until we had gained the latitude of Florida, when a northwesterly storm drove us some hundreds of miles out of our course and separated us for several weeks from our consort. By reason of this misadventure we were obliged to beat back to the north in order to take advantage of the trades to run down upon the island from the nor'east, which was highly essential, so my great-uncle said, else we must be compelled to thread the dangerous mazes of the Bahama group or sail uncomfortably close to the eastern coast of Cuba.

To the west of the Bermoothas—within sight of which we never came—we encountered the *Walrus* again, Flint having had substantially the same experience as ourselves, and thenceforward we continued in company. Other ships we occasionally sighted from the mast-head; but as Murray was particularly anxious to avoid calling attention to his presence the cry, "Sail ho!" was the signal for our bearing off upon any course which would fetch a compass around the strangers. This fact, together with the time lost through the storm, protracted the voyage near a month beyond what might have been expected, and we were eleven weeks out of New York when a cluster of rocky peaks soared above the heat-haze dead ahead.

My great-uncle, after a single squint through his object-glass, handed the instrument to me.

"'Tis the island," he said. "I'd know those peaks anywhere."

THE double lens etched distinctly a rugged spread of land, shelving up out of the sea from a succession of yellow beaches on the east to a series of small hills which culminated in a range of considerable height along the westward side, running almost due north and south. The interior seemed to be heavily forested; the trees climbed the mountains to within the last few hundred feet of their summits, which were bare rock, precipitous in the case of the midmost and highest, a lusty, cloud-hung giant which dominated the island.

"That is Spyglass Hill," said my great-uncle, noting the intentness of my survey of it. "'Tis there we maintain our lookouts whilst we are in harbor, and some men give the name of the hill to the island. But in truth the place hath no set name, and is dubbed by each to suit his fancy. You may judge this to be all the more so when I add that Spyglass Hill is known likewise as Mainmast Hill. Do you see the two other high peaks in line with it, north and south? That to the nor'ard is called Foremast Hill, and its twin in the south is Mizzenmast Hill."

We were on the port tack, clawing off to work to eastward of the island's mass, and as he spoke we opened up a sizable bight. Rocky headlands fell away to tree-clad shores, and I caught the gleam of a little river which flowed into the upper end of the basin.

"Is that our haven?" I asked.

"No, 'tis in no sense as secure as that which we customarily use," replied Murray, "although safe enough in storm. It is called the North Inlet. The principal harbor is known as Captain Kidd's Anchorage, and is bitten into the so'east corner of the island. We shall not open it for another two glasses."

The breeze was dwindling, which was fortunate for us as we required plenty of sea-room to weather the island; and the east coast, though flat and sandy, offered no feasible harbor or roadstead. The surf boomed up on the beaches with a steady roar which we could hear above the creaking of our vessel's cordage and the shrieking of the sea-birds whose countless flocks wheeled overhead as we approached. A half-mile astern of us the *Walrus* was bouncing in our wake. Seaward in every quarter the horizon-line melted into the infinite expanse of the ocean.

To me, used to the busy life of a bustling little town or the tossing treetops of the forests of the wilderness, cloaking beneath their restless boughs all manner of wild and savage life, there was something appalling in the isolation of the blotch of land ahead of us.

A continent in miniature, complete with capes, bays, inlets, rivers, mountains, woods and fields, it was yet so utterly desolate in its setting of blue-green water. Actually, I believe, 'twas as much as three leagues in length from north to south, and perhaps better than a league across at its widest. But as I stared at it from the poop of the *Royal James* it seemed less than the green dot of Nutting Island,* which lies in the mouth of the East River over against New York. And what scenes of heart-rending cruelty it had witnessed! What acts of ruthless perfidy!

Nearing its shores, I descried the tangled masses of trees which clothed most of its surface. A few conifers shot up to goodly stature, but the greater part of the forest growth was gnarled, wind-tortured dwarfs, misshapen abortions of trees. The whole effect of the place seen from offshore was sinister and forbidding, repulsive as the silent ferocity which emanated from the blind man Pew.

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*Governors Island.

The crew of the *Royal James* eyed the unfolding shoreline with a slackness of interest which surprized me. Men did not talk together. There was no jesting. The bracing of the sheets and trimming of the yards brought forth no more than the customary amount of shouting and "yo-ho-hoing" without which indeed the sailorman is powerless for good or ill.

I commented upon this; and my great-uncle, silently contemplative beside me, smiled.

"If the ensuing weeks meant leisure and carousing it might be we should be put to it to maintain our standard of discipline," he said. "But as it chances, our crew find confronting them a task of difficulty and duration, the which they know and realize. And therefore, Robert, are they silent, and not because of the spell of evil deeds which you think to decipher from our surroundings. Evil enough the island hath known, I doubt not. What place could not as much be said of? But men, and especially seamen, reck little of an evil past if land be usefully available for their needs. No, no, my boy; you shall sleep securely tonight in Captain Kidd's Anchorage, for all the ghostly memories it contains. And Peter shall eat without a qualm, for the *James* will lie as still as the dry land in the haven's shelter."

"We get some fenison, *ja*," spoke up Peter, with marked enthusiasm for him.

He pointed toward the slopes of a hill this side of the Spyglass, and I had a brief glimpse of a string of white dots which leaped from crag to crag.

Murray laughed.

"You have keen eyes, friend Peter," he observed. "But if you will accept the aid of my glass you will perceive that what you saw were goats—the descendants, we are told, of a flock left here by the old buccaneers, to whom we owe an appreciable debt therefor. Goatflesh is not venison by long odds, but it hath much to commend it over salt beef and pork, and the tender bits of a young kid seethed in the milk of its dam—we are not obligated to obey the Mosaic code—might appeal even to an epicure of as unquestioned taste as yourself. There are, too, certain wildfowl and a breed of duck not to be despised; and we shall have much store of fish and shellfish. Yes, I can assure you additions to our diet which should go far to reconcile you with your lot."

Peter's face shone.

"Dot's goodt," he said. "*Ja*, now I fill oop my stomach wit'out it yumps from der wafes."

Several miles south of this mountain we sighted a white rock on a point of land and beyond it an islet and beyond that a much larger island. Murray ordered the helmsman to edge away to the east, and presently we bore off on a long tack to the so'east to fetch us around a patch of shoals. A man was ordered into the forechains with a leadline, and several others relayed his soundings aft along the deck to the poop. The water shoaled rapidly from ten fathoms to five and a trifle less; but Murray conned his way coolly, the *Walrus* scrupulously exact in our wake, and of a sudden we went about on the starboard tack and opened a wider, deeper harbor even than the North Inlet, on the right hand the shores of the smaller island, on the left the main itself.

My great-uncle turned over the conduct of the ship to Martin and crossed to where Peter and I stood, staring about us. Already we were under the lee of the smaller island, and the ship was making less way as the force of the wind was decreased. The water seemed strangely quiet—instead of bouncing us up and down, it did no more than purr and ripple as the bow cleaved through it. And the heat of the sun, unrelieved by the free sweep of the wind, became intense. In a few moments the decks were hot to the touch, and we might not lay our hands with comfort upon the bulwarks.

Here were no beaches; only mud-banks covered with twisting, many-rooted trees to the waterline, their foliage of an ardently soft green presenting impenetrable, whispering barriers to the eye. The channel curved, following the contour of the smaller island, and we sighted the mouth of a little river similar to that which had flowed into the head of the North Inlet.

"Starboard, Master Martin!" called my great-uncle as he joined Peter and me. "Starboard your helm, if you please. Aye, on to this shoal here. We shall have three fathoms and less to careen in. Bid them drop the anchor."

Martin bawled an order. A whistle piped, and there was a great clatter and rustling of rope running loose, a mighty splash that drove the birds in tumult into the air; and the *Royal James* swung to her cable close under the lesser island's shore. My great-uncle waved one hand over the bulwark.

"Skeleton Island this is called, Robert," he said. "I tell you because you demonstrate so gruesome an interest in the more horrifying episodes of our past. But I regret I must confess that I know of no authentic detail to account for the nomenclature. Pirates have a way of naming a spot to suit themselves, without rime or reason, if the fancy once moves them."

"May we land?" I answered, ignoring his gibe.

"Suit yourselves," he returned with a shrug. "I must have all my men busy aboard here, however, and can spare none to guide you."

"*Ja, ja*," urged Peter. "We shoodt some goats, eh?"

"If you please," agreed Murray. "Ben Gunn will find you a brace of light muskets preferable to our rack-blunderbusses. I'll have the gig put overside, and you may row yourselves, if you will."

"Are you not afraid we may plan to escape?" I asked curiously.

"How?" he countered. "Look about you."

"We might fashion ourselves a vessel," I declared. "A raft, at the least."

"And whither would you go?" he pressed me. "These seas are unfrequented and tempestuous. Also, I do not think that you would be able to construct a vessel in the amount of uninterrupted time I should allow you. And finally, my dear nephew, I must remind you that you have promised your aid to me in a certain matter."

"I need not consider that binding in event of an opportunity to escape," I retorted.

"You need not perhaps," said he. "Yet you would."

And with that he walked off and bade Saunders order the gig lowered overside. Nor did he say another word until we had secured our weapons and a packet of food from Ben Gunn and returned to the deck. Then he gave over supervising the cock-billing of the mainyard and joined us at the gangway.

"I desire above all things, Robert," he said, "to deal gently with you. Therefore I ask you to believe I am considering your own safety when I ask you to promise me to be aboard again not later than an hour after sundown."

"Why, what harm——"

* * *

THE *Walrus* slatted past us, her canvas in a slovenly mess alow and aloft, a dozen men howling orders and counter-orders from poop, waist and fo'csle, Flint in his red coat strutting the poop and adding his own bellow to the din whenever the confusion showed signs of dissolving. Pew was huddled over the wheel, the green eyeshade masking his powder-burned eyes, John Silver tall beside him, a-leaning on the carven mahogany crutch, his cool, pleasant voice the one sensible sound in the tumult on those disordered decks.

My great-uncle's eyes strayed across the narrow gap of water betwixt the two vessels.

"Well, ——, it's been a —— of a voyage, Murray!" shouted Flint.

"We are here," returned my great-uncle urbanely.

"Aye, and what to do wi' ourselves?" Flint called back. "Blast me for a —— —— if I can see what five hundred —— —— —— are to do wi' months on their hands, and naught but rum-drinkin' and quarrelin' for diversion."

"There's your ship to clean, man," replied Murray. "She needs it."

Flint answered with a curse. The *Walrus* had slid on too far for all his words to be distinct, but I heard a fragment of the beginning.

"—use o' cleanin' ship? Only a —— —— swab o' a —— —— Navy officer 'ud think to —— —— his——"

My great-uncle indulged in one of his essentially Gallic shrugs and dusted a pinch of snuff into his nostrils.

"Captain Flint doth not agree with me, it seems. A strange character, and eke a forceful one, Robert, for all his inherent stupidity and blindness of view. But to return to your question. You were about to ask me what harm could befall you ashore. I answer you that I do not know, but that in all candid truth we are here, to quote my associate, some 'five hundred —— —— ——,' and accidents may happen. Therefore, I suggest that you be aboard not later than an hour after sunset. On second thoughts, Robert, I regret that I shall be unable to permit you to leave the ship save upon your parole on those terms."

"You have it," I answered shortly, and followed Peter down the side-cleats into the gig.

We rowed up the estuary for the mouth

of the little river which we had seen from the *James'* deck, and our course took us under the yellow hull of the *Walrus*. A shrill voice hailed from a gunport, and Darby McGraw's red head was thrust out beside the frowning black muzzle.

"Glory be, Masther Bob, and do they let ye go free wherever ye will? Sure, it's yourself must be one o' the grand favorites over yon. Are ye an officer yet?"

I was about to answer him when Flint gloomed down at us from the towering poop.

"Gut me!" he sneered. " 'Tis Murray's by-blow, no less! What d'ye make o' this, Billy?"

The brutal face of Bones showed above the bulwarks.

"He's a pris'ner," jeered Bones. "Only he ain't; d'ye see, Flint? Into New York Murray went to crimp him, and now, by —— —— —— he gives him shore-leave!"

"Come aboard here, my hearty," Flint hailed me.

"We are going ashore," I answered; "and I have reason to hasten."

Flint scowled.

"Well, ye'll come soon enough. And when I get ye—sheer off, —— ye! There's too much politics and favoritism aboard the *James* to suit me, and ye can tell your great-uncle or grandaddy or whatever he may be, blast him for a —— —— —— —— ——, that John Flint says so!"

Darby bobbed up on the poop beside him very much out of breath.

"Och, will ye let me go along o' Masther Bob, captain?" he cried. "Do now, avick! Sure, I hain't seen him this long three-month gone."

"That I'll not," snarled Flint, turning his back to us. "Isn't this ship good enough for ye, Darby? Ain't you our luck? Will I let you go and ruin it by rounding up wi' Murray's by-blow?"

"Troth, he's no more'n the old masther's son that I worrked for in New York, captain darlin', and him that good to me always I had a main likin' for him, indeed and indeed I did! And I'm fair crazy to be ashore, afther the weeks and months we'll ha'——"

Flint clapped him on the shoulder, abruptly jovial.

"Ah, if it's ashore you'd be that's a different matter," says he. "I'm for goin' ashore myself. Bill, call all hands away for the boats, and we'll have a grand goat-hunt up Spyglass. John Silver shall barbecue 'em for us. And break out a couple o' casks o' rum. Lively now, my lads! We'll enjoy ourselves like the honest pirates we are!"

A frenzy of cheering answered him, and I backed water with my oars.

"You heard, Peter?" I said to him over my shoulder.

"*Ja;* dot's badt."

"We can't go where they do."

"*Neen.*"

I reflected and examined the surface of the main island, rearing itself before us on the opposite side of the estuary. A half-mile perhaps eastward of the river we had been heading, for a second and less inviting stream oozed its way into the haven through a succession of swamps. Beyond it toward the island's eastern shore the country was sandy and open. The Spyglass and the intervening hills were miles to the west, clear across the island and the two streams.

"There we'll be safe, Peter," I said. "They're not going in that direction, and if they do by chance come after us we'll be able to see them."

"Maybe we better go back to der ship," he answered doubtfully.

"Not I," I returned grimly. "We won't look for trouble; but if it comes our way we'll meet it."

"*Ja*," he said, and bent to his oars.

We did not enter the second stream, because the swamps along its course presented no landing-place, but ran our boat aground on a sandy bank on the far side of a point which concealed us from the *Walrus*. Then we took our guns and walked inland through the trees up a graduated sandy slope to the top of a little hillock whence we could look off through the aisles of pines and see the *Walrus*, with boats putting off from her sides and pulling into the mouth of the first of the two streams, and over a spur of Skeleton Island the topmasts of the *Royal James*.

"This would be a good place for a fort," I mused.

"*Ja*," said Peter. "You got water, too."

He pointed to a streak of green vegetation along the sandy slope of the knoll, which we traced to a spring issuing from the summit.

"Now we got water, we better eat," he added.

"But what about the goats?" I cried. "We were to——"

"No," he insisted stubbornly; "we don't

shoodt. If we shoodt, der pirates hear us andt come. We waidt until they are all ashore. Then we go back to Murray."

"I'll not be driven from the first pleasure we have had in months," I protested childishly.

"We do it again," replied Peter placidly. "Next time Murray he comes wit' us himself, *ja*."

"Yes, but——"

"Now you be sensible, Bob. Der Injuns is goodt friendts beside them fellers, *ja*. We go back to der *James*. Soon all o' them be ashore andt drunk. Drunk, they like to kill us, but they can't row—*neen*."

And we rowed back to the *James* ingloriously in the dusk, the shouts of the *Walrus*' carousers echoing to us from the shore.

CHAPTER X

HOSTAGES

THE watch aboard the *Royal James* challenged us as we made fast by the larboard side-ladder, and when we climbed over the bulwarks to the deck Master Martin flashed a lanthorn in our faces with a gust of oaths in his absurdly gentle tones.

"By the —— ——. —— ——, but I hoped 'twas that —— —— Flint come a-seekin' mischief," he complained.

"Where is Captain Murray?" I answered.

"In his cabin."

And in the same mild manner he continued to his men:

"To your stations. Remember cap'n's orders. Now these two are aboard, ye'll fire at any boat that approaches and challenge afterward."

The negro lackeys stood aside as we came to the cabin entrance under the poop; the door was open. Down the dark tunnel of the companionway with its stateroom doors on either hand Peter and I could see my great-uncle sitting at the table in the main cabin, a glass of wine at his elbow, a chart spread out before him. He raised his head as we entered.

"You were cheated of your sport, I conclude," he greeted us. "The watch informed me a half-hour since they had heard no shots ashore."

I recounted briefly our conversation with Flint and the determination Peter and I had reached in consequence. He nodded agreement with it.

"You did quite right, Robert. Peter did not exaggerate the dangers inherent in the situation."

"You appear not to feel any too safe yourself," I answered sarcastically, "with sentinels posted on your decks ordered to shoot into any approaching boat."

"I do not," he assented with perfect equanimity. " 'Tis true I should be surprized did our confrères of the *Walrus* undertake to assault us, but I have had too much experience with desperate men, especially when they are under the influence of liquor, to discount the possibility of their adopting any atrocious idea which might enter their heads."

"Do you mean that you live in perpetual fear of treachery from Flint's crew?"

He considered the question, sipping at his wine.

"Perpetual is too strong a word for the occasion," he decided at length. "Let us say rather that the experience to which I have previously referred has taught me that under certain circumstances—such as the license practised after the tedium of a long voyage—a band of men who recognize no authority save the strong arm may be induced to excesses they would not otherwise attempt."

"Then we don't shoodt no goats?" asked Peter sorrowfully.

"On the contrary, friend Peter. We most certainly shall. 'Tis not only a question of securing you the opportunity of sport which I promised you, but of varying the diet of my crew, with an eye to maintaining all hands in good health at a time when we can not afford incapacity. Tomorrow morning I shall be occupied in organizing the work of careening the ship, so that her bottom may be cleaned; but in the afternoon we will take a party of beaters to aid us and arrange a battue in the Continental fashion. By that time, I anticipate, Captain Flint will have returned to his senses—recovered from his debauch, in other words. If he has not——"

He shrugged, and I gathered that the contingency would not be a happy one for Flint.

"You will excuse me," he went on, "if I return to my studies. I have much upon my mind."

We bade good night and went to our staterooms, weary enough from the unwonted exercise of rowing. As I shut my door I noted that he was measuring distances in the Caribbean with calipers and jotting figures upon the margin of the chart.

In the morning, as he had said, all hands were occupied with the task of careening the ship. In the first place she was to be hauled over to starboard to expose her larboard bottom, and all her guns and movable stores and heavy equipment were shifted to starboard to give her a list on that side. Then her yards were cockbilled to keep them clear of the water, and heavy cables were run from her masts to the shore, looped around trees and carried back aboard, and the crew by main force, a few inches or a foot at a time, canted her over. The tide, as it dropped, aided them by bedding the keel in the estuary's soft mud floor, and gradually the *James* came to assume a most lopsided appearance.

'Twas when the work had gone so far and was proceeding satisfactorily that my great-uncle bade Martin tell off a dozen hands who were good shots and call away the longboat.

"I marvel that you dare to leave the *James* in this defenseless condition," I said to him as the longboat pulled off up the anchorage past the silent bulk of the *Walrus*. "If there was danger last night ——"

"—there need not necessarily be danger this afternoon," he interrupted. " 'Tis all quiet ashore, and I doubt if there is a man sufficiently sober aboard the *Walrus* to carry a carton of powder from the magazine."

"But by evening they'll ha' slept it off," I insisted.

"True, and with it their lust for bloodshed—for the time being, at any rate. Our problem then will be to turn Flint's mind to some undertaking which will divert his attention and occupy him until we need no longer be concerned for his whimsies."

We landed south of the first river, below where Flint's party had held their carouse, and proceeded inland through a wooded valley, with hills rising to right and left of us and the Spyglass towering in the distance. The day was very clear, and the mountain's summit was a gray cone against the blue of the sky. A soft wind whispered in the trees; the beat of the surf came to us faintly; the severity of the sun was tempered by the shade; and the pine-mast was springy to our feet. Even our sullen, hangdog escort of seamen became almost cheery under the influence of their changed surroundings, and with the sight of their first goat they began to whoop and shout like schoolboys. Murray, despite his age, was as spry as the youngest of us, and he never wasted a shot.

At his suggestion we turned north along the lower flanks of the Spyglass, circled the intervening hills—foot-hills they might be called—crossed the headwaters of the first river, traversed another patch of forest and forded the second river at a point where it ran shallow and clear between two of the marshy stretches which were its distinguishing characteristic. This route brought us over to the eastern side of the island some distance north of the hillock Peter and I had visited the preceding evening, and when I remarked this fact my great-uncle expressed interest and requested that we should visit the place. We had by now shot sufficient goats to load down all our bearers, whilst Peter carried half a dozen brace of various birds, to the eatable qualities of which Murray bore testimony.

We had maintained a brisk pace on our wanderings, and we reached the site of the spring well before sunset. My great-uncle surveyed the situation with a calculating eye, estimated the stand of timber on the hill's sides, and exclaimed that there was no neighboring eminence whence an enemy could command it.

" 'Tis all you have asserted it to be," he said. "Moreover, it gives me an idea of a way in which we may occupy the energies of Captain Flint and his lambs for the ensuing weeks of our stay."

I asked him what he intended, but he would not answer me, striding off with his head sunk on his chest after his manner when plunged in thought. The seamen, who had awaited us at the foot of the hill, fell in behind us, and we retraced our steps across the swampy river and the intervening belt of forest to the first and larger stream. This, too, we recrossed, but instead of continuing on as we had come Murray turned down the course of the stream in a southeasterly direction. A thread of smoke trickled up beside the mouth of the rivulet in the woods along the estuary, and I indicated it to him.

"There is Flint," I said.

"Yes," he replied absently, and kept on.

THE shadows were lengthening as we stepped out of the forest into a glade on the river's bank. Several additional fires had been kindled, and around each were huddled groups of pirates much the worse for the last night's drinking-bout. John Silver was the only man who appeared to have any animation left in him; he hopped on his crutch from one fire to another, supervising the roasting of the haunches of goat, which were spitted in front of the flames with pieces of hardtack placed beneath to catch the dripping juices. 'Twas he first saw us, and evidently spoke to Flint, who sat with Bones and several other cronies at the smallest of the fires. He swung toward us as Flint rose unsteadily and tacked in his wake.

"Come a-visitin', captain?" Silver inquired cheerfully. "Mighty kind o' ye, sir, seein' as how most o' our lads is a bit the worse for liquor and blood-lettin'. My duty to ye, Master Ormerod. I hopes I sees you and your friend well?"

"Blood-letting?" repeated Murray, ignoring the balance of his remarks. "The old story, eh? Well, well! You'll never learn. How many for the sailmaker's palm and needle?"

"Three, captain. And main lucky we are as ——"

Flint lurched up beside him.

"Stow that, John," growled his captain. "I'll do the talkin'. What's your trouble, Murray?"

My great-uncle took a pinch of snuff with his inimitable knack of expressing acute disgust without moving a muscle of his face.

"I have been a-hunting," he replied. "Shooting for the pot. We stopped on the way to our boat to pass the time o' day with you, Flint."

Flint snorted.

"Time o' day! ——! 'Tain't like you to take the trouble."

"I am a person of most uncertain proclivities," replied my great-uncle. "I hear from Silver that last night's episode was accompanied by the usual fatalities."

"Three," assented Flint. "Two o' em could be spared—lousy dagos. The other was Toby Welsh, as stout a fellow as we had."

"Not bad for one night's work," commented Murray.

Flint was obviously in no very belligerent mood; he could scarce stand. But he flamed up at this.

"Aye, and what d'ye expect? How many months did ye tell me I must bide here wi' a crew that knows naught but how to brew the ——'s broth? And how many men d'ye think will be alive by the end o' the time? Gut me, but 'twill be like the song we sing o' the Dead Man's Chest!"

"I fear it will," agreed my great-uncle. "Unless you take measures to prevent it."

"Measures?"

Flint cursed with the fluency of the man who enjoys his work.

"There's a deal to be done in keeping twelvescore men from fighting on this chunk o' earth and rock!"

"There's your ship to be cleaned," said my great-uncle tentatively.

"I'd ha' mutiny on my hands did I call for it! They're all for a run ashore, and there'll be no working them aboardship until they ha' had their fill o' woods and mountains."

"Ah!" said my great-uncle. "Doubtless that is so. Well, if they must remain ashore a time, is it not in their own interest to erect themselves some shelter from the elements?"

Flint stared at him curiously.

"Ye've an idea in the back o' your head, Murray. Out with it!"

"We have often said that some day we should build ourselves a fort on the island," answered my great-uncle.

"We ha'."

"I came upon the ideal spot this afternoon—a sand hillock overgrown with fine pines and oaks eastward of the swamps. It hath the airs from the ocean, a good prospect of the anchorage and the nearer waters, and there is a spring at the very top."

"And I'm to do the work!" snarled Flint.

"Your men are to do the work," corrected Murray. "I should gladly assist them in it but for the fact that my own crew will be occupied aboardship during the duration of our stay. We of the *Royal James*, I may point out, are laboring in the common interest no less than your people will be if they undertake the construction of the fort."

"Blast me for a —— —— fool if I care two —— —— —— for the common interest!" cried Flint. "But 'tis true there is need of the fort, and if the men will bide ashore they should ha' a roof to their heads and a better place to camp than down here in the river vapors. I'll see what's to be done, Murray. Not tonight—there's no man of us, except Long John, curse him! can put two thoughts together. But in the morning 'twill be different. We'll fetch off a boatload o' axes and shovels, and I'll turn 'em to. I think it can be done. —— me, it must be done! I can't lose three men a day for the next six months!"

"You'll not regret it," replied my great-uncle. "I shall be glad to lend you aught I possess in the way of tools or advice."

"—— your advice!" snapped Flint. "The tools I'll take. Is that my hostage wi' you?"

"'Tis my grandnephew, yes."

"Ye may as well leave him then. We can use him on the fort. He's not too proud to hand and haul, is he?"

Murray stepped so close to him that notwithstanding the dimness of the twilight their faces were clearly discernible to each other.

"When the time comes for it my grandnephew will be placed in your hands, Flint," he said quietly. "And I shall hold you strictly accountable for his treatment."

His manner chilled.

"D'you hear, man? Strictly accountable, I said. The feckless knave that lays a finger to him, who has my own blood in his veins, shall be flayed alive and bound to the bowsprit of the *James*."

"Oh, aye," mumbled Flint, and faded into the shadows.

Long John Silver, who had tarried within earshot throughout their dialog, stumped forward again.

"It grows sudden dark in these 'ere latitoodes, captain," he said. "Will ye ha' one o' our boats to take ye off?"

"I thank you," replied my great-uncle. "We shall have no difficulty in finding our boat."

He did not speak again until we were pulling across the star-flecked waters of the anchorage.

"I think," he announced causually, "we need have no cause to worry over the defenseless condition of the *James*."

"A dozen shot under water—" I started to say, when Peter spoke up.

"He gets them all ashore, Bob. *Ja*, dot's it! All der time they work, andt so they don't t'ink about der *James*."

"A singularly acute mind our Peter has," commented my great-uncle.

THIS strategy was completely successful. The building of the hilltop fort appealed to some boyish strain submerged beneath the surface villainy of Flint's scoundrels. They went to their task with positive enthusiasm, clearing the hillock of timber, sawing and squaring the logs and erecting a substantial house of the more massive logs and after that an open stockade or paling of sapling stakes six feet high. The house-walls were loop-holed for musketry, and Flint commenced to talk of a pair of bastions to hold six-pounders; but this was after the work had gone forward two months and his men were becoming weary of ax and saw.

Toward the end of our sojourn the *Walrus'* crew were committed to a serious effort to exterminate the goats of the island, and since this occupation was to be preferred to the extermination of one another, which was their favorite sport when their energies were not otherwise diverted, nobody was inclined to stop them, my great-uncle least of all.

His personal object was already accomplished. The *Royal James* was back upon an even keel, her bottom scraped clean, her hull fresh-painted inside and out, her rigging overhauled and canvas in order, spars tested and a weak topmast replaced, guns varnished, stores checked and stowed, sufficient great-cartridges for three actions prepared by the gunner, ballast aboard and distributed with a careful eye for sailing trim.

"As sweet and proper as though she was just from the hands of the dockyard fitters at Portsmouth," was Murray's comment on an evening about the beginning of August.

The three of us sat at table in the main cabin, Peter still occupied with the fragments of a wild pigeon. Through the open stern windows drifted a tag-end of song from the *Walrus*, lying a cable's length higher up the anchorage:

"The Frenchman took Moon's knife in the throat—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle o' rum!
But all they found was a rusty groat—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle o' rum!"

"That is Flint's voice," continued my great-uncle. "I am glad he is aboardship. 'Twill save us the inconvenience of a journey ashore."

And to the query of my raised eyebrows he replied:

"The tide ebbs on the break of dawn. I purpose sailing then."

"And you must deliver the body of your hostage beforehand," I answered as disagreeably as I could.

"Even so," he acknowledged. " 'Tis regrettable, Robert, yet the time will come, I venture to predict, when you will look back with pride upon the inconvenience you suffered."

"I'll accept the inconvenience if I may escape the rascals alive," I retorted.

"Of that you need have no doubts," he said earnestly. "I shall accompany you, and you may hear my parting instructions to Flint. Friend Peter, will you indulge me for the space of half an hour whilst I visit the *Walrus* with my nephew?"

"*Neen*," answered Peter, and pushed away from the table. "I go too."

"No, no——"

"I go too."

"But naught was said of two hostages——"

"If Bob goes, I go," insisted the Dutchman. "*Ja*."

Murray shook his head.

"For you I might not be responsible, Peter."

"I be responsible for myself," said Peter. "I go to der *Walrus* or you go oudt der window."

My great-uncle stared at him for a moment, then burst into laughter.

"By gad, you would! And after become captain in my place, no doubt. You are unmatchable, Peter. What do you say, nephew?"

"I'd not have Peter risk his throat with mine," I answered uncomfortably, the words of Flint's song still ringing in my memory.

"I go wit' you, Bob," repeated the Dutchman.

"You see!" cried Murray. " 'Tis useless to object. Go with you he will. Well, you'll have company at least—and I shall lack a companion whose presence is not the less valuable for his silence. A good friend is Peter, Robert. I would he were mine!"

Peter rose.

"We go," he said. "*Ja*."

On deck Murray had the longboat called away, and we embarked in silence. 'Twas a hot night, with very little air stirring, and the ribald uproar on the *Walrus* was amazingly distinct. The *James* was like a tomb by contrast. Not a sound came from her, and the only lights she showed were in the waist and the main cabin. The *Walrus* was a blaze of lanthorns from poop to fo'csle, but Murray hailed the deck twice before he had an answer.

"Boat ahoy!" responded a husky voice then. "Why 'n —— don't ye come aboard?"

" 'Tis Captain Murray to see Captain Flint," replied my great-uncle calmly.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the husky voice on a quaver of fear. "We'll call him directly. Will ye come aboard, sir?"

My great-uncle turned to Peter with one foot on the side ladder.

"Are you certain you must go with Robert?" he asked. "I can assure you no harm shall come to him."

"*Ja*, I go."

My great-uncle's reply was a shrug of indifference, and Peter and I climbed after him to the deck. The noise of revelry stopped dead as he appeared, but the visible evidence of it was plain to see on every hand. A cask of rum with the head knocked out stood by the foot of the mainmast. There was a pool of blood on the deck-planking by the fo'csle companionway, and a pallid-cheeked fellow was binding up his arm in a dirty headcloth and spitting oaths at another man who composedly wiped his knife clean on a frowsy coil of rope. Fore and aft men had been gaming, drinking, quarreling and singing—and all abruptly halted whatever they were doing to stare at us.

Murray returned their stares with an undisguised repugnance which I discovered myself to share. The *Walrus* was a revelation after the ordered discipline of the *Royal James*. In a word, she was pig-dirty. Her deck was littered with all kinds of rubbish; her rigging was slack and spliced in a fashion which seemed lubberly to me, who was a lubber; her canvas was torn, poorly patched and wretchedly furled; boats, barrels, lumber, spare spars and cables lay about in entire confusion. The planks we trod on were slippery with grease. The paint was peeling from the bulwarks. There were spots of rust on the muzzle of a chase gun, which itself was hauled out of its proper position.

Flint came swaggering down to us from the poop in a condition which was in harmony with his surroundings. Like most of his men, he had discarded coat, shirt, stockings and shoes to accommodate himself to the heat of a tropical Summer. His loose canvas trousers, identical with those the seamen wore, were streaked with dirt and tar. His bare calves and forearms were covered with dried blood where they had been scratched by brambles in his shore expeditions; out of the matted hair on his chest was thrust the head of a tiger, most marvelously tattooed in black and yellow. His hair was a lank frame for his saturnine face, stubbly with a week's growth of beard.

Sure, the contrast was as sharp betwixt him and my great-uncle, immaculate in figured black satin, hair sprucely dressed, as betwixt the two ships. He sensed it himself.

"What d'ye seek, Murray?" he growled. "Come to look us over?"

"I am come to fulfil my contract with you," replied my great-uncle. "I am sailing with the morning ebb, and I bring you, not one hostage, but two."

Flint stepped closer and scrutinized Peter and me.

"Two, eh? What do I want wi' two? What good's this fat man to me? He means nothing to you."

"On the contrary," denied my relative. "Master Corlaer is an old and valued enemy of mine, of whom I have hopes of making in time a friend."

"Well, he's no good to me; gut me if he is!"

"You will take both or none," said my great-uncle in the voice like a dripping icicle which he knew so well how to assume.

"Nasty, are ye?" rasped Flint. "Blast ye for a ——"

A light in Murray's tawny eyes kindled like a flame under the reflection of the battle-lanthorns which were hung from the lower spars.

"Two it is," Flint ended hastily. "But ye'll never see either one o' 'em if ye don't make good on your bargain. I ha' supported much from ye, Murray, but ——"

"You'll support more for sufficient gold," rebuked my great-uncle. "Tut, man, I read you like a book. When we first encountered you were proud to be mate of a trading-brig. I have put you in the way to rank and fortune, if you know how to exploit your opportunities."

"Rank and opportunities!" jeered Flint with an ugly laugh. "Aye, ye took me when I was an honest young man and made a pirate o' me. And the only opportunity I'll win through you will be to kick the air in Execution Dock."

My great-uncle helped himself to snuff, tapping his box as Flint talked.

"Hark ye," he broke in when the *Walrus* captain had got so far, "I am pressed for time. I have but two things to say to you. Guard well and cherish carefully these two persons I commit to you, and in two months I'll hand over to you three hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

"You said seven hundred thousand," snapped Flint.

"I said seven hundred thousand to be divided betwixt the two ships."

"Oh-ho! And ye'll take captain's share o' the *James*' half, eh? As well as your hundred thousand slice?"

"My terms are perfectly clear," returned Murray. "Now for my second point. When I return it may be we shall have need of swift keels. I recommend you to get your ship in decent condition. As she stands, you could be carried by a Portuguese slaver."

A shrewd look dawned in Flint's face.

"And where are ye a-goin' to pluck this million and a half o' treasure from?" he demanded. "You ha' said much of it, but you told me little. What course doth the treasure-ship sail? Where do you lurk for her? There's wide seas betwixt the Main and the Atlantic, and ye can't stop every hole, Murray."

"You may safely entrust that portion of the task to me," replied my great-uncle dryly.

He offered me his hand, and somewhat to my own surprize I found myself inclined to accept it.

"Robert," he said, "I regret exceedingly the necessity I am under of inflicting this unpleasantness upon you. I shall endeavor to provide you adequate reparation. You also, friend Peter. Remember, we are working for a greater cause than our personal enrichment."

He vaulted lightly to the top of the bulwarks and dropped out of sight on the farther side. His shoes clicked on the ladder-cleats, and we heard the rattle of oars as his boat put off.

"Gut me, but there's times I think he believes all he says," swore Flint.

TO BE CONTINUED

KIT CARSON'S TWO WEDDING DAYS

by Josiah M. Ward

ON THAT day in 1843 when Kit Carson led the young aristocrat, Señorita Josefa Jaramilla, to the altar in the little old-fashioned church in the little old-fashioned town of Taos, N. M., his memory must have gone back to the other bride of his, the bride of his younger years who sacrificed her life for love of him. And as the children of the town clustered about the church to behold the beautiful bride and the grandees of the province who had come to honor the bride's family, he must have given a thought to his own little girl, the only child of that other bride, forgotten by all save Kit Carson, himself.

Of the blue blood of old Spain came Josefa Jaramilla and the union was destined to be a happy one.

She was fifteen years of age in 1843, a beautiful bud just ripening into the perfect type of her Castilian ancestry. "Her beauty," wrote Lewis Garrard, world traveler, who saw her four years later, "was of the haughty, heart-breaking kind, such as would lead a man, with the glance of the eye, to risk his life for one smile."

It is improbable, on this day of all days, even when replying with a smile or a bow to the ceremonial felicitations of the wedding guests, after the manner of the stately dons, that Carson's thoughts did not revert to the momentous Winter rendezvous of trappers held at Fort Hall ten years before.

Association with these same dons had given him the polish and suavity of their race, and his garb was that of the fashionable man of the period, but beneath the fine coat of broadcloth, and the ruffled shirt of cambric, beat the heart of the same Kit who formerly followed the trail in a worn suit of buckskin. Hence the picture of old Fort Hall, and the events that occurred there, fitted into the present nuptial occasion, even amidst the prodigal courtesies of the Jaramilla home where the bridal reception was held.

The Rocky Mountain forts of the fur days were not army posts; they were fortified trading-stations where Indians and white trappers sold the furs they had collected, along the streams, far and near. When the weather became too inclement fo their occupation the whites gathered at th most convenient fort, erected their warn fur lodges close to wood and water an "holed up." The Indians scattered to thei homes, but usually one or more bands caugh by a sudden descent of freezing col weather, or having horses to sell or trade or other business, settled down for a prolonged stay.

Carson had a vivid recollection of th day ten years before on which he arrive at Fort Hall. He and two companions ha fought their way through a fierce storm which alternately shrieked and whistled roared and thundered in its course dow the valley of the Big Snake River as tha stream widened and narrowed, turned an twisted. The three were passing throug the Indian village, which was readily identified by the barking of many dogs, when th light patter of running feet arrested thei attention.

"Kit! Kit!" he heard a soft voice calling He recognized the voice as that of Alice daughter of Standing Bear, a chief of th Arapahoes. Bidding his companions to proceed to the fort, he got off his horse an clasped the girl's hand.

"Howdy, Alice; I didn't know you wer here."

"I heard," she explained rapidly, speakin in her own tongue, with which Carson wa familiar, "that you would be here toda and have been on the watch for you. am in trouble, Kit—but first come into ou lodge and have a smoke with my father."

Turning over his horse to an Indian, sh led the way to the lodge. There he foun Standing Bear, an old man who had los all his sons in tribal warfare and had onl Alice and her younger sister left to comfor him in his declining years.

"*How!*" said he in a tone which woul have sounded empty and meaningless t less accustomed ears, but to Kit Carso signified the heartiest welcome.

"*How!*" repeated Carson.

Half an hour was passed in smoking an chatting, during which Kit learned tha nearly a hundred French-Canadians an half-breeds employed by the Hudson's Ba

Company had set up their lodges in the trapper village, were drinking heavily of the fort's trade whisky and threatening to exterminate any Americans who objected. Their leader was a Frenchman, the biggest bully of the lot, a man named—Standing Bear could not pronounce the name.

"Shuman," vouchsafed Alice.

It was a very unusual thing for a girl of Alice's youth to break into the conversation of her elders. Carson took a keen look at her. He detected that there was a motive back of the interruption. This was made apparent when she followed him out and guided him to the lee of the lodge out of the blustering wind. How well he remembered that night!

"Shuman?" said he. "What of him?"

"He has sent word to me to come to his lodge, to be his squaw, his slave," she explained breathing heavily. "If I do not come he will drag me there. But you are here, Kit. You will protect me, I know. The Standing Bear is too old to fight this man Shuman." Then: "Do you like me, Kit?" she asked with the Indian directness.

"You know I do, Alice. Don't worry about Shuman."

She gave a glad cry. In her eyes the mighty Kit Carson was invincible.

At that time Kit Carson bore the reputation of being a man who had fought Indians and wild beasts without flinching and had emerged victorious from every combat. Now, on his wedding day with the lovely Josefa Jaramilla, when he had settled down to a quiet life—as he supposed—he could afford to bestow a kindly thought upon his earlier love, and to think tenderly of his child, Adelina, the little girl whom he had confided to the care of kinsmen in Missouri. Surely Josefa, who was enjoying herself with the carefree gayety of youth, would not object. There was but six years difference in their ages. They would be companions. (Vain dream!)

So Carson's recollections must have preceded to the sequel of his arrival at Fort Hall. His two companions speedily informed him of the doings of the French-Canadians and half-breeds, adding that Shuman had notified all men to keep their hands off Standing Bear's daughter Alice, as he had selected her for himself.

Carson said nothing, but diligently oiled his pistol, with which weapon he was the then greatest living expert.

The next day the affair neared the climax when Standing Bear entered the traders' store to obtain tobacco. Shuman was there, drunk.

"Tell that gal Alice of yours to bring her bag to my lodge tomorrow," he ordered the chief.

Standing Bear did not comprehend his meaning. He stared at Shuman.

"Why for?" he asked.

"To be my squaw," roared Shuman.

"I go see Kit," stammered the chief, walking out. He found Carson, who laconically advised him to rest easy.

The next day dawned bright and cheerful, Carson distinctly recalled marking one of those fairy-like transformations from storm and gloom to sunshine and calmness which is characteristic of Rocky Mountain weather. The French-Canadians had given it out that their champion, Shuman, was going to make an example of the upstart American who stood between him and his destined squaw. Over a hundred men milled about the trapper village, the French-Canadian largely predominating and making no secret of their contempt of the Americans.

A temporary bar set up by the trader in a borrowed lodge fed the appetites of those who craved liquor. Shuman was not drinking. During the night he had heard things about the "little upstart American."

Standing Bear and Alice made their way through the crowd to Carson's lodge. The chief ominously carried a gun. The girl ostentatiously carried a beaded bag containing her meager collection of garments.

"You miss'um, I get 'um," said the chief to Carson.

"I stay here, Kit?" asked the girl. Kit nodded and beckoned to her to take possession of the lodge. The act, with Standing Bear as witness, constituted the Arapahoe marriage ceremony.

When Carson reached this stage in his recollections we may suppose that he paused to consider the heaped-up treasures of silks and satins, of velvet bottines and delicately laced *mantillas* and *rebosas*, and those handwrought articles of filmy texture which were not yet ready for even a husband's inspection and admiration, nor would be, according to high Spanish etiquette, until after the wedding night, when he could call Josefa his very own.

The women hanging over them were muttering the muffled cries of wonder, and openly expressed envy. The older men politely refrained from even a casual glance in the direction of these mysteries of a woman's toilet; but the younger ones bantered the smiling bridegroom. So, amidst this festal scene, with its outpouring of Latin vivacity, its color and brightness, we must leave Kit Carson to his pleasure and happiness and finish the episode at Fort Hall as history records it.

Shuman armed with a rifle, emerged from his lodge at ten o'clock, mounted his horse and entered the lists, not unlike a knight of old, loudly proclaiming his contempt for American chicken-livered skunks.

This was the signal for Carson to mount his horse, armed only with a pistol, and canter forth. The two must inevitably meet.

"You dirty scullions must get out of this camp," cried Shuman to a group of Americans. "If you don't go peacefully I'll cut me some switches and drive you out. You are a crowd of American cowards and I challenge any one or a dozen of you to meet me."

By this time Carson was near.

"I am an American, Shuman," he said in a quiet, even voice. "If you want to make it a duel, ride a hundred yards; I will do the same, both to turn and fire at will."

"If you want to be killed I have no objection to that way of doing it. Start, you coward."

This method of dueling was favored by the old frontiersmen, especially so by men accustomed to killing buffalo from the back of a running horse, as were both the contestants in this case.

Friends of both men paced the distance in opposite directions the duelists moving with them. The distance completed, word was yelled to both. They turned instantly. The onlookers within range shrunk back. The duelists approached each other at full speed. Shuman raised himself slightly in his stirrups, took aim and fired. A lock of Carson's long hair was seen to fall, but Carson continued to approach. As he aimed Shuman threw up his arm to protect his breast as Carson fired and his bullet struck Shuman's hand, ranging upward and lodging in the elbow. Blood poisoning set in and he died two weeks later.

"He was the only man I never regretted killing," Carson said years after, exhibiting the mark of the bullet under the long hair.

That night was his first wedding night. A year later, shortly after the birth of the baby Adeline, Alice heard that he was lying in a mountain-cabin desperately wounded in an encounter with a mountain-lion. Without a moment's hesitation she sprang upon a horse bare-back, and leaving the child to the care of others rode the hundred or more miles intervening, going a night and a day without rest, exchanging horses with Indians, and reached his bedside. The long ride, however, brought on puerperal fever from which she died. Carson mourned her death as only a strong man can mourn.

"She was a good girl," he said to his friends, over and over again.

The PRESIDENT

by John Eyton

Author of "The Gap in the Fence," "Ood," etc.

HE WAS the greatest of all the mahsir, or barbel, shadowy inhabitants of the deepest water of that deep and mysterious river, the Indian Cauvery. He was really a tremendous fish—enormously fat and wonderfully old, so old that he had almost forgotten the careless days when sun and sparkle had seemed good to him, and he had reveled in leaping clear of the gay water; when, a vivid young thing of silver green, he had lived in the swift shallows and pursued objects bright as himself. He had been slender and shapely in those days, with a driving head and a tail for speed.

But now he had passed through all the stages of a mahsir's life—from the silver-green of youth to the gold-green of adolescence; thence to the pure ruddy gold, shading to pink beneath, that betokens the pride of life; and thence again to the color of old copper, with scales as big as saucers. He was almost black now. His back was indeed black, and only underneath did he retain the gleam.

His head too was heavy. How could it be otherwise, armed as it was with jaws capable of closing over the head of a man? Perhaps for that reason he rested it, for the most part, on the mud, and lifted it but rarely. After all, it was heavy with the weight of over two hundred years.

As his age and his wisdom entitled him, he was "President" of the shoal; but it was not the shoal of old days. They never chased one another now past rocks into wild white water, for the sheer love of feeling the resistance and conquering it. They never scrambled for moths and bees. They met for business alone—business concerned with the exploitation of the nutritive resources of black mud. Had the water of the Cauvery been clear, the spectator from above would have seen nothing but a crop of enormous tails waving gently like monstrous weeds over the muddy bottom. But the Cauvery is never clear in that deep, mysterious home of theirs.

Yet sometimes the spectator might have seen more. A tree, gnarled and twisted, lurches over that pool; and, in the hot and languid days, the tree bears milky blossoms that taste sweet. It was when those milky blossoms splashed into the water and shone pale in the moonlight that the shoal remembered the days of their youth. Then they withdrew from the mud. And, though at other times they seemed only vaguely to know one another and never to make overtures of intimacy, then they gamboled for the blossoms. Very late on a still night even the President himself would join the sport, rolling ponderously over on the moonlit surface. There were portentous

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"The President," copyright, 1924, by John Eyton.

gurgles and splashes then. The shoal was like a school of golden porpoises.

Now, the month of the sweet blossoms was the gala month of the year. It represented springtime to the shoal—change of diet, freedom, rejuvenation. But for it, they would never have raised their heads out of the mud. But when the blossoms fell they had perforce to go up to them. For the blossoms never sank. They circled three times in an eddy and then they floated away.

"When the white blossoms sink" was synonymous with "When all's blue" or "When the cows come home" to the Cauvery shoal. It was their idea of the Golden Age, for, though they enjoyed a gambol on the surface when they got there, they were lazy fish. They would secretly have preferred that the blossoms should come down to them. That would have been perfection indeed.

Then without warning one hot Summer evening the miracle happened. The Golden Age came to pass.

The President was closely scrutinizing his particular allotment of black mud when out of the corner of his right eye he caught sight of a gleam of white. He rose slightly and peered at it in the dimness. It was an indistinct round object, white against the blackness. Had not the notion been incredible, he would have believed it to be a white flower.

Very tentatively he touched it with the feelers that grew like whiskers about his mouth—and it gave a sensation of softness and a smell of sweetness. Then he ate it. The sweetness had been no delusion. It *was* sweet. The Golden Age ——

THEREAFTER the sweet, white food descended like manna every evening. The shoal had no need to ascend for their sustenence. It dropped into their mouths. And in the twilight of their home they never doubted its authenticity. The white blossoms, they believed, had at last begun to sink.

At that period had a spectator been able to pierce the gloom of the water, he would have seen great, grinning mouths instead of waving tails. He might even have thought that the mouths smiled, for the shoal was very happy.

Their happiness persisted for no less than twenty-one evenings. For twenty-one evenings the white food fell; and its quantity, if anything, increased. There was almost enough for all.

Then on the twenty-second evening a strange thing happened. The youngest of the fish, ranging—as young fish will—rather nearer the surface than the rest, seized a particularly large portion of the food; swallowed it; and disappeared!

There was a show of restiveness over their heads; a swirling and plunging; a shivering of the water and a dance of bubbles; then—unnatural calm. They waited. But the young fish did not return. They called it the "Food Madness."

But they soon forgot, or put it down to the account of youth. The food descended as before and gave the same comfortable sensations. Indeed, seven more evenings passed without a repetition of the distressing intoxication that had afflicted the youngest member of the shoal.

Then in one ill-omened evening three of the older members, including the "Vice-President," developed the same symptoms, one after the other. Having eaten, they sped away and indulged in a motiveless gambol—now in the shallow, now in the deep. They wantoned. They raged. They sulked. Then they disappeared.

That evening the white food was regarded with general suspicion. Never had the shoal experienced such uneasiness.

THE President spent a restless night. He was very hungry, but the strange thing was that he could fancy only the white food. The appeal of the black mud had vanished. He could take no interest in it, for it represented effort—digging and probing—and he had now grown unaccustomed to effort. So in spite of his better judgment he hungered for the white food.

Then with daylight, like a dim, edible moon, the white food came. In its slow descent it actually touched his nose, as if it were meant for him and for him only, and he caught a whiff of its sweetness.

Hardly conscious of what he was doing, he acted as he had so often acted before. He opened his mouth and he closed his mouth; and, lo, the food was gone. He moved away delicately to enjoy it. The sweetness stole over him —— Then it was that to the President, inured to all the experiences of the underwater world, there came a sensation that was new. The white food, it seemed, had life. It moved in his mouth.

Long ago, when his mouth had been yet tender, he had consumed a crawfish, and for one startling instant the crawfish had resented the process. It had tweaked the interior of his mouth.

The interior of his mouth was like thick pigskin now; but strangely enough his sensations recalled the adventure of the crawfish. He felt a tweak. No pain, but a distinct tweak. Never before had the white food behaved so.

It was his duty to convey the fact to the others—to give the alarm.

"This is no blossom," he should have told them. "This stings."

But he was strangely prevented from doing so. There was a curious impulse to leave them altogether, to ascend.

The Food Madness! Could it be that he ——

He was not alarmed. Rather, he was bewildered. He began to cruise in circles, with anxious jerks of his enormous head, and the circles became wider and wider. He knew that this procedure was undignified. He knew that the other members were eying him curiously. With a spasm of indignation he saw that they were beginning to shun him—him! But he could not help it. For the first time in the second century of his life he was finding it an effort to keep still!

In a flash he understood. The world was topsyturvy. Why? Clearly because the white food, which could not sink, *had* sunk. Or as we should have said, the cows *had* come home. All *was* blue. It followed then that everything should happen upside-down—that he, at his time of life, should want to make Catherine-wheels was only one symptom of a universal *bouleversement.*

The appreciation of the situation did not prevent him from throwing Catherine-wheels. He threw three in rapid succession; and, half-way through the first, he caught a glimpse of the whisking tails of the departing shoal. It was the last time that he ever saw them; for breathlessness ensued, and he took the line of least resistence. He yielded to the unmistakable impulse to ascend.

There was a sudden, great glare. He had a strange feeling of nakedness. Then——

ACCORDING to the computation of man he weighed a hundred and twenty pounds on the bank, but the two men who carried him away regarded this as an understatement.

DOWN DIM PASSAGES

by Sidney Herschel Small

Author of "More Than Half a King," "Mother of Beggars," etc.

CRIES rocking down the dim passages of the river brought Gilbert Clark out of the inn a moment before the host's summons. A bare-legged boatman sculled him through the confused border of fishing-craft and into mid-stream, there to await, one of several, for the steamer.

In some low-roofed concealed temple a priest's young voice began to chant loudly, almost fiercely. It sounded fanatical and defiant, but tremendously believing, proud in the faith it proclaimed to all hearers; heedless it was, and very powerful; almost, Clark thought, impudent. It stirred him, the wildness of it, and yet he smiled slightly as he looked at his boatman, who, unconcerned, was already sleepy under the sun.

A broad boat, no longer than a harbor-tug, churned around a rectangular bend of the river, passed the expectant passengers with hooting whistle, and—a hundred feet distant—strove valiantly for sternway. Clark's rower sidled fearsomely up to the moving steamer, urged to wakefulness and daring by the white man's promise of ten extra *sen*, and Clark, bag in hand, clambered into her through a small square hole while she was still in motion.

He found himself in a timbered gangway, three feet wide and almost five high, and in the thick of a squeeze of passengers and baggage; once in, it seemed impossible to advance or retreat. The engine-room gratings poured a wonderful fluid heat into the corridor. Clark waited with the back of his head pressed against the roof until, in some unimaginable way, an officer jammed and squashed through; he followed the Japanese's bulk, reached a doorway, and fell over a heap of sandals and *geta* into the first-class cabin.

The cabin was also extremely occupied.

Polished mirrors and varnished woodwork doubled and trebled the occupants; men stretched at full, comfortable length upon the floor; women squatted at their feet. Bars of metal extended across the ceiling, and from these hung parcels, straw valises protruding clothing, bottles tied together at the neck, and two cages of clacking crickets who made the air vibrant with their "*min-min-minminmin-zzzzz*——"

The heat was supernatural. Clark scrambled to his feet and stood in the doorway, the focus of every placid, uninterested eye. None moved for him, nor could they. At last he carefully picked his way over the tangle of bodies and outstretched legs (among them a fairy pair belonging to a tiny *geisha*) to an opening in the port side of the cabin.

He found himself in another gangway, roofed, filled to the very top; there was no visible exit, so he climbed over the legs and tried the starboard a second time. During the short interval of the steamer's stopping, this had been clogged, every crevice between body and baggage, with uncrated and unhappy chickens, tied in threes by the legs.

Clark, unconsciously imitating the officer who had made his interference before, lowered his head, made a reckless dash amidst frantic cluckings, and succeeded in breaking through and scrambling to the cabin roof. This was piled with vegetables and green melons, the former making a bulwark against the rolling overside of the unripe globes; the port corner only was free of this edible cargo, held so by a giant coil of rope. The missionary shoved some of the cargo aside, and sat on the edge of the roof, legs dangling over the ladder. Forward he saw the top of the second cabin with Japanese gathered about a brazier, quiet now that the boat was in sight of a town, but ready to break into laughter and cries the moment she was out and down the river again.

The boat gathered speed with a stunning scream of the whistle. In another instant her funnel began to pour soot upon Clark; then came cinders mixed with the soot. Some of them were red-hot. Clark tried to imagine a method of changing his position without another charge upon the fowls. The second cabin was forward of the stack, and the Japanese upon it were noisily content, but he saw no way of getting to it. Nor was there any way to escape the stack's volcano save by climbing over the piled vegetables.

Worse, his seat was proving precarious. Whatever he touched that seemed clamped or rigidly braced proved to be dangerously mobile. In the midst of this trial the frightful little craft began to swing, and the melons to rush back and forth with the swaying. Clark stood up, cautiously trying every rope or stay before trusting his weight to them, and looked enviously at the high pile of rope. Notwithstanding his care, a taut rope slackened as he held to it while the boat dipped, and he went into the radishes.

He heard a chuckle, and came as best he could to his knees.

"The thing was built by demons," he heard, and, with that, a man's face rose from the middle of the coil of rope; rising (as far as Clark could see) Aphrodite-like.

Clark grinned back.

"No," he said seriously. "I am told that she was designed and built near Nagasaki, and, everything considered, she really might be worse——"

"I beg your pardon," the other interrupted. "In point of fact, I do not agree with you. I'd rather be in a sampan."

An extra-hot cinder bit at Clark's face, and he brushed it away.

"Climb over the radishes," the man called. "There's room enough here for both of us. And a spare drink, perhaps."

Clark hesitated.

"I might damage the vegetables."

The other snorted, and then laughed.

"If you had seen the poor fellows struggling with a half-acre of land, trying to grow a crop sufficient to support themselves and their families, you'd not laugh, sir!"

"I see you struggling with the cinders! And it will not be long before the confounded funnel'll vomit a good-sized coal, and then you will have a first-degree burn. Crawl across, man! If the stuff were worth anything, it'd be covered."

Clark still hesitated.

"Come along! You act like a missionary."

"I am."

"Stay where you are, then," the man snapped, and immediately ducked into his coil of rope.

The air was perfectly still. As the steamer gained way great clouds of smoke and soot belched up, hung a moment, and then settled slowly upon Clark and his vegetable-bed. In rifts of it he was able to mark that the rope-coil was unflecked by the constant eruption.

"The cinders are surely damaging the cargo more than I will," he muttered, and began to climb over the giant radishes toward the haven of his fellow-passenger.

"Well," he heard, while he was still in the black fog, "are you coming over to argue with me? If that's it, let me change places with you. Come over. I'll sit in the smoke."

"No." Clark choked as he opened his mouth. "I'd like to share your place, but I'll never suffocate you with my talk."

"A missionary with a sense of humor! Climb along, jewel! But you might as well know I've a bottle here, and intend using it."

"Possibly the smoke would hurt you less."

"Stay where you are, missionary!"

Clark chuckled, still creeping over the vegetables. He reached the coil, stepped up on the outer circlings of it, and pulled himself over.

"Easy does it—good—there you are. Careful of that bottle, man! Now, come on, I'm watching it—this is something like, eh?"

The two men looked at each other.

Clark saw at first glance that the stranger was thin to emaciation; thin, and nervous of hand, mouth, and eye. He was very brown, but utterly without Clark's tinge of saving color; his face was ochre, out of which black eyes stared curiously at the little missionary. He was naked to the waist, a coat beneath his head. The bottle projected from between his legs, and next to it an unmistakable bag.

"You are a physician, sir?" Clark asked.

The other did not answer.

"A surgeon, then?"

Very curtly—

"I am."

"Your bag, you know. Usually I'm not so observing. I live in a tiny town. Hishiura. And I do not see many white men there. Where have you been? Research? Or have you been practising? In some inland hospital, possibly? I met another surgeon—what was his name?—you might know him. He told me——"

"Oh, shut up!" the other said disagreeably.

The steamer had left the last river-hut with overhanging balcony behind, the town was completely out of sight behind a bend. A path shadowed by overarching trees followed the water; they passed a stone *torii* with figures of apes chiseled in relief. Another *torii*. A place of prayer, containing nothing more than a lacquered money-box. A Chinese roof upon withered bamboo stakes, cut too green. More stone lanterns. A shrine, empty of any deity. Broad steps out of the river, sleepy lions of wood at the top, with a temple somewhere hidden by trees.

The smoke blew higher, lifted by a light, firm breeze; sharp sweet scents of water and shrubs reached Clark, and soon a blood-brightening, vivifying sea wind. Pale white clouds formed without beginning or shape, all at once.

The passengers on the forward cabin's roof chattered gaily. From below came snatches of minor-tuned songs, and, at intervals becoming closer spaced, women's laughter shrill and clear.

"Like the Coney Island boats," the man whispered. "How like the Coney Island boats!"

"I should like to be on one again," Clark said timidly, mindful of the other's curtness

The coatless man did not answer, nor did he make any gesture of rebuff, and Clark continued quietly, quickly:

"I would have liked to take my vacation in the States. But a week or so in Chosizen is the best I can manage. Perhaps I'll get to Osaka. I don't know. But there is a large mission at Chosizen. Tramp steamers unload there, too. I think there is a cinematograph. But I would like—" very wistfully—"I would like to go home, also." Then, very slowly. "Won't you tell me your name, sir? I meant no harm by my earlier question. I did not intend being rude."

The other was silent.

"Are you certain you do not know it already?" he snarled, after a long interval.

Clark shook his head.

"How should I?" he asked simply.

"I don't believe that you do!" How should he, the man asks! I'll tell you what it is! It's Stone. That's me. Stone! Now go on and climb out of the rope. There aren't any cinders falling. Not that you'd mind them, to get away from me. Stone! I'm Stone!"

"Why should I climb out of the rope?"

"Why? Why? Has the man no sense? I told you my name was Stone. Dr. Stone of Yokogi. Stone who was too drunk to operate. Stone that the missionaries reported. All of 'em. From the Mormons down. Or up. If you come into Chosizen with me, you'll go back to the States fast enough on a permanent vacation, when your chief sees your companion!" Bitterly, "You're the only man in Japan who doesn't know the story."

"I don't care to know it."

Very slowly, the doctor turned his eyes squarely at Clark's, defiant, and yet unafraid.

"It was true, you know," he said soberly.

"Was it indeed, doctor? I myself am not interested in the story. As for your being with me, or I with you, I expect I may hear a thing or two about my own conduct. I live in Hishiura, and they call me——"

"The fighting priest? You?"

"Me." Clark laughed. "You would not think it, to look at me, would you?"

Notwithstanding, Clark glanced complacently at his round little figure.

"No," Stone said frankly. "I would not."

He lifted the bottle.

"Mud in your eye!" he proposed.

He set the bottle down.

"Empty!" he said needlessly "And they may say what they like, but I'll never touch *sakê*."

"Nor I."

Stone looked up crossly.

"Don't be funny," he said, and lapsed into silence again.

Clark decided that the lie he had uttered was a worthy one. "You can never believe what you hear in the Orient," he had protested when the story of Dr. Stone had been relayed to Hishiura. Yet here it was and, what was worse, verified by the principal actor. The story had been simple and without ornamentation—so simple that even at the time it was told him by a neighboring missionary Clark had half-believed it, despite his protests.

This Dr. Stone—the story was—had been in a hospital in the northern seaport of Yokogi. There was little to be done there, and much to distract a man doing little. This Clark readily understood. But there came to him now, again, the sight of this white man, Stone, powerful of physique—no trace of power left now!—standing over an operating-table, utterly drunk, totally unmanageable, refusing to operate himself, refusing to permit one of the German-trained Japanese doctors to do it—and the ultimate dead man upon the table.

The story had gone the rounds, and, by the man's own admission, it was true.

"It—it might happen to any one—to any of us," Clark blurted, showing the other his thoughts. "Next time——"

"There will be none. You missionaries will see to that."

Stone stood up, and threw the empty bottle overside.

"It had better gone when it was full," Clark said gently.

The black eyes of the surgeon were losing their brightness; the bottle had been full when he had boarded the boat.

"It will be a long time before I've another full one," he said evenly enough.

"Let me—let me advance you——"

"The missionary buying booze for the sot!"

"I did not mean that."

Stone smiled sardonically.

"Of course you didn't. You meant that you would see me to the local What-Cheer-House, and buy me ham-and-cold-storage-eggs!"

Another sneer.

"And a quarter for a bed."

Clark flushed.

"Not that, either. It—what I can advance you are welcome to—it would be yours, of course." Clark stumbled into another sentence: "To do with as you wish, naturally."

"You're a good sort, Clark. That's your name, isn't it? You see, your fame's gone as far as mine. You're too decent to be a missionary. I don't mean good. I mean decent. Forget it. I never go drinkless. Not for long, *yen* or no *yen*. And when I damn your dear brothers, and that which they stand for, I'll leave you out. Don't stare at me. I mean just what I say. When I said 'that which they represent'—was that what I said? I mean all they are supposed to represent, as well as that which they actually do. I'm sick of talking. I'm going to sleep for a bit."

He mumbled a few words which Clark caught.

"My nightly ritual," Stone said hoarsely. "And morning. And afternoon. I ask you, Clark, why shouldn't I curse what I am? And what made me so! And who made me so! Don't argue with me. I'll not listen. I want to sleep."

He opened one of the fast-closing eyes.

"Counteract that with your psalm-singing," he added.

Clark brushed flies from his companion's face.

THE night slipped on, misty and sharp. Both banks of the river dimmed; the great stone *torii* became gray ghosts, no longer to be distinguished from the trees about them.

Once, wakeful, Clark saw a funeral procession slipping along by the wan glow of uncolored paper lanterns, a short train of indefinite figures gray-robed and gray-hooded. A troop of ghosts, like the *torii*. The shapes became hazy, in moments lost all form and drifted into the darkness of the bank. Firefly-like, the lanterns pricked on through the gloom; the bell of a concealed temple clanged to greet them, a smaller gave *pizzicato* accompaniment. The chatter of the steamer voices stilled, and in place, from the banks, came a high nasal chant. Below-decks the *geisha* laughed twice, the second cut short as a baby's sudden cry of pain.

The great bell sang again, more rapidly, and with constantly increasing clamor, wiping out all other sounds in the reverberation.

Stone awoke.

The surgeon from Yokogi looked at Clark with averted eyes, then stood up, leaning limply against the rope, cold, cross, still, and—so Clark had reason for believing—very scornful. Wrinkles of pain were blocked into his face as broad as those of an early-shogunate woodcut. He stood watching the moon rend the mist and reveal the lagoon above Chosizen to a wide sheet of silver, gray, and ultramarine.

"Did I talk?" Stone asked grimly.

Clark nodded.

"I tell the truth when I'm drunk."

He clapped a hand on the other's unflinching shoulder.

"Forget what I said."

"I have."

"Did I—do you—you know who I am?"

"Yes. You told me."

"And what I am?"

"What you said you were."

The surgeon's lips twisted into a mirthless grin.

"Will you have supper with me when we land?" Clark asked easily.

"You're a fool, missionary!"

"That's as may be."

"I remember this much of our conversation," Stone rumbled on. "You are a missionary and a fool, and I'm a sot and a fool. I'll eat with you fast enough, and waste a bit of those fools' money—those sleek, smug Pomeranians at home who send it to you, and [illegible]e gates of their private heaven!—you know, Clark, you'll eat—no matter where it comes from—when you're hungry. But, call it an obsession, if you wish; a drug, an anodnye, anything you want, but I must have a drink. *That* I'll take care of myself.

"We're fools, all of us. You, because you don't know it, and I because I do. And those at home because they're fooling themselves. Sent here by the greatest Fool of all. All damned, I say. You, and I. Why shouldn't I do the same for Him?"

He paused, and gathered his breath, exploding into:

"And I do! I do!"

Clark licked dry lips, but looked intently at the blasphemer.

"When I first operated, it made me feel—god-like. Life in my hands. A prayer on my lips every time I began. And then—it was lonely, Clark. And because I forgot—My head aches," he concluded angrily. "Will this tub never land?"

The missionary had not heard the last.

"All comes right in the end," he said, in place of more definite answer.

"Advocate of hell-fire!"

"No. I do not believe—there, I question nothing, but I see that you think you have been harshly used——"

"Rot!"

"And used you will be. You must—play out your hand."

"It is played for me. By a Fool. Now, missionary, tell me that you will listen to no more such raving."

"I will listen as long as——"

"She's whistling," Stone said at the first preliminary cough. "Got any baggage? Let's get out of this stinkin' vegetable crate they call a ship."

Clark first, the doctor after him, they clambered down from the roof of the cabin. In vain Clark looked for his bag; he had placed it at the foot of the ladder, but now it was gone. After an impatient moment Stone pushed him aside and grasped the first kimono within reach; purred at the Japanese, and immediately had the bag pointed out to him, nearly covered with parcels.

It was steaming and hot in the gangway, but Clark remembered that the air outside was growing chill, and that it would soon be cold. His companion had drawn on the black coat, and Clark whispered hastily:

"I've some extra shirts in my bag I'll not need. Do you go to the roof, and put one on. I know how it is—I've been without things myself——"

"Mine bought the bottle that's overside now," Stone retorted. "It warmed me better than any shirt. For a time. You ought to know the rule of the East, Clark. Take what you want, then go home and send missionaries to preach!" He laughed. "I'll do the first, and leave the rest to others."

As he talked, he reached to the floor, and jerked the black cloth covering from some traveler's bundle, bound it about him so that it fell over his bony chest, and then buttoned the black coat tightly over it. His face, as he did, wrinkled into radiating lines of satisfaction.

"I'll have a collar, if you've one you'll spare."

Clark fumbled the catches of the bag open, and brought a collar out.

"Thanks, no; no necktie. A collar button, please. Oh, but this will be immense!"

He put the collar on, not correctly, but with the opening, the place for the tie he had refused, in back.

"Have you by any chance an extra black hat, like you're wearing? You have? Great! That makes it absolutely perfect! Do you remember John Daly's dance-hall and saloon? Of course you don't, but the swine charged me a *yen* twenty for one drink, when I first came to Japan. A *yen* twenty! And I didn't know any better. I ought to be able to take the change out in trade."

He pulled the soft hat over his eyes and chuckled loudly.

"I see a sampan, and we're slowing up—*hail!*" he shouted at a boatman.

Stone grabbed the little missionary's bag as well as his own shabby instrument case, made a way for himself to the steamer's side, with Clark close behind; roared again for the sampan, and leaped into it. Clark waited until the craft was closer to the ship's side, and then followed clumsily.

Ashore, Stone led his companion away from the foreign section. At a barber's shop, where Japanese smoked about a brazier while awaiting their turn, the doctor grinned. He was apparently in high spirits, and willing to make conversation.

"That's the reason I've kept my instruments," he said. "I sold my razor, but I'll never go shaveless until this bag's contents are sold."

They turned away from the dimly lighted shops and into streets narrow and dark; warehouses, black, windowless walls; once Clark saw two men following them, the first carrying what might be a knife, the other a rickshaw shaft broken to convenient length.

"I do believe that some one is coming behind us," Clark said in a low tone.

The doctor turned.

"So they are," he whispered back happily. "So they are."

He pulled Clark quickly into the doorway of the next warehouse.

The pursuers stepped softly down the alley.

Stone jumped suddenly before them, hands swinging; they turned and fled.

"I thought they'd fight," the white man sighed loudly.

"It would have been—interesting," Clark agreed. "They had weapons, and we had none. You are no physical coward, Dr. Stone."

The missionary did not see the expression upon the other's face as they walked on in silence.

"We're almost there," Stone said tonelessly.

A burst of light, the whiter because of the ink-black street, swam out to meet them as they turned the next corner.

"Vice should be gray, but it is always bright to the eye," Clark decided, but said nothing.

Stone halted.

"Do not act as if we were going—where we are going," he told Clark. "That's the place. John Daly's. Comfort and booze. For man. And beast. A *yen* twenty he charged me for a single drink, when I knew no better. This'll be poetic justice, missionary. They'll laugh at old John as long as he's in the Orient! Don't turn to go down the steps. They'll come for us, or I don't know Japan dives. That's fine; just walk along as you've been doing."

Clark walked as he had been doing, and as he was directed, but without volition, without being directed from his brain. He seemed carried along, attracted, as if the lights were a moth-trap.

Truly, as they reached the lighted patch, marking a kerosene-lighted stairway leading below, a toothless, ancient woman and a leering youth jumped from the shadows, grabbed their arms, and invited them in.

"You come, sweethearts," they both insisted.

Both Japanese, they had scraps of obscene English. Clark heard wild laughter and music on the upper floor; a mechanical piano gravely paraphrasing a waltz, a phonograph blatting the latest month-old jazz from the States—the *shuff-shuff* of feet on a floor; even, as the needle registered two silent bars, the hiss of a seltzer bottle.

"Come along," Stone said nervously. "I wish I had a cigar[illegible] Come along; I need that drink."

He shook off the ancient hag's arm gently.

"Stay where you are, mother," he said in gutteral north-province dialect; grasped Clark's elbow, and, side by side, they went down the rickety wooden stairs.

GILBERT CLARK had counted long upon this vacation, this respite from the tedious days in the little inland village of Hishiura. He had thought many times of a great deep-dish apple pie, with an orange slice of creamy Wisconsin cheese melting across the top—and the house-boy would bring him pickled sliced beets as a sweet. . . .

Out on the coast, in Chosizen, he would be able, he figured in idle moments, to get some new books. To see white faces about him, and discuss what the world was doing; he might even run up to Osaka, or possibly return by way of Kyoto, and see white women. Hear them laugh. He wanted to see a cinema, with cowboys trailing across a sun-dusted plain; a garden spiked with foxglove or hollyhock or canterbury bells. He wanted to go home. Next year, perhaps, he might. It seemed as if it must always be next year.

But now, this moment, he was standing on the last of the wooden stairs of a Chosizen sailors' resort, with swinging-doors just before him, and glancing at his companion, the renegade surgeon of Yokogi, the man who had brought death through carelessness, through drunkeness; the man who hated his fellow men; the blasphemer. Involuntarily, Clark had stopped on this last stair, and looked at Dr. Stone; the other seemed drawn by the intent gaze, and, stopping, turned and faced the missionary. The surgeon's bravado fell from him, and he stood with his hands hanging at his sides, impassive, but with bent head and lids drooping over his eyes.

Clark waited. He did not mind the disgust which he felt like an emanation from the room ahead, the room with the swinging-doors, but sensed a sudden great hatred for it, for his wordless self, and for Stone. He knew only vaguely what Stone intended; that the doctor meant in some way to obtain liquor without payment, yet this disturbed the missionary little enough. What troubled him was that, from the expression of utter weariness upon Stone's face, the surgeon planned something that would mean a step which could not be retraced. What, Clark did not know.

The two stood there, mute and motionless. During the electric silence Stone's hands hung at his sides, and, combined with the drooping head, made him look more the puppet than the man. His whole body had a strange aspect of listlessness, almost of feeble inertia, yet Clark knew how muscular the surgeon was, although he had obviously long since ceased to care for his body.

Stone stood so absolutely still that Clark began to feel uneasy, even afraid. The nerves in his body were tingling; had the other burst into harshly-violent words he would have found ready answer, but this immobility, this dumbness, made him the same. Clark wanted to speak, to move, to draw the other back, and yet felt obliged to wait for him. He stared into the haggard face and Stone met his eyes resolutely.

"It's the end, you know," Stone said dully, as if forced to speak. "I'm trying to make a play of it. Ever seen a man after he starts—flim-flamming for drinks? I have! Go back to your mission-house, old man. Start your vacation. I—I'm going on one myself. Back, Clark, back to your missions! But let me have my last—play."

Clark neither answered nor moved. He *had* seen men after they had cadged for drinks. In the Orient, he knew only too well how fast the finish came—after that.

"It's written that I'm done," Stone reiterated.

"Nothing can last forever," Clark murmured huskily. He wanted to say, "Come back with me!" and could not.

Stone suddenly ducked his head closer to his shoulders, gave the collar a twist, pulled the soft black hat close over his eyes; laughed, soft as that of a lover, but with a terrible lilt.

"I'm going in," he said.

Clark followed.

The little missionary felt like a man sunk; felt the mire creeping up to his throat. Nervousness seized him, he was unable to look at the other and, instead, fastened his eyes upon the oblong bag which Stone carried, and held them there. The doctor pushed the swinging-doors open.

Confined odors swayed at the two white men. Fuming Japanese-tobacco cigarets. The stench of boiling horsemeat and fish frying in rusty pans. The sickeningly sweet bubbling and vapor from a huge iron mush-pot. And over all, like an overpowering *ylang-ylang* scent, the steady acrid whisky smell. A long Trenton-made bar jutted out into the bare-floored room, shining from many polishings, and behind it a mosquito-barred mirror ornamented at the top with *papier-mâché* roses once pink, now a yellowish magenta. At a round table a stoker slept, a serge coat over his singlet, waiting the ministrations of the half-caste bouncer. The smell of wicked bodies, foul clothes, drink, and language made the air well-nigh solid. A fungus-bed of misery.

Upstairs the piano clanked about its business; voices raised in a chorus, where the verse had been whistled for lack of words.

Before Stone had reached the bar the keeper was out from behind it, his hands on a hanging towel as soiled as one used by a thousand Shinto mendicants.

He rubbed his hands together, and bowed. "Yes, yes, father?" he said ingratiatingly.

"I do not feel very good," Stone said in a low, hesitating voice. "I believe that I need—my stomach is very upset—quite upset——"

"Come with me, father. You and your friend."

He clucked about them like an anxious mothering hen, and into a tiny parlor very neat and clean.

"Wait, father, for one little moment. I'd never offer you th' swill I've here. But downstairs, now—just one moment, father—" and was gone.

Clark turned to the doctor. It came to him now, in the light of this room, that the man was a masquerader, an imposter, and that it was perfect; the soft dark hat, the collar wrong-side before, the black vest—which had been the bundle-covering on the boat—and dark suit—all the habiliments of a priest. Even the thin, emaciated face bore out the part Stone was playing; under the hat—the bitter eyes partially concealed—it appeared ascetic, restrained, semi-ethereal.

Stone laughed at the missionary's scrutiny.

"So now you see?" he chuckled. "Am I not every inch a priest? Or, say, a priest turned to Stone!"

He laughed again; before the echo died the bartender was back.

"See you, father," he said eagerly. "Forty-one years ago it came over th' seas. See th' five stars on th' label. Five stars, and forty-one years aged, and more before that, belike—" a soft plop as the cork was tenderly drawn—"and do you say 'when,' father."

Stone said when.

"Just a modest little drink for my insides," he added easily.

"Do not apologize, father. Do I not know what this ——'s land is, and what it does to a man?"

Clark blinked as the bartender poured a second glass, and pressed his finger-tips hopelessly together. Stone's eyes lighted malevolently as he sensed the missionary's fear.

"It is not the drink, nor what it does that harms," the doctor said softly, "but the man into whom it goes! Eh, brother?"

He grinned widely.

"To the pure in heart all things are evil."

Clark suddenly reached for the glass and gulped it down.

"They do say that—it shows the real man, the man beneath the surface," he retorted boldly.

Stone laughed again.

"Of course, *brother*. 'Know thyself,' what?"

John Daly did not understand what it was all about.

"Take yourself another, father. One alone is lonesome. Now that th' bottle's open 'twill be shameful to waste it. A favor to me, father. Don't say no."

Stone did not say no.

"But I am the sick man," he did say. "My good friend has sampled your very excellent whisky, and that is sufficient for him. I feel better already, but for companionship suppose you join me?"

The barkeeper bowed deeply.

"I thank you, I thank you, father," he said happily. "'Tis a long time since I've touched glasses with a man—with a priest—like yourself! These scuts who come here, I'd never be seen drinkin' with them—but a man must live, father, and——"

"And what would the devil do if we didn't give him trade?"

They touched glasses, and drank.

Stone became expansive.

"This is really wonderful. A grand soothing whisky. You are John Daly, aren't you? My dear John Daly, you have driven away the trouble in my insides. Hey, and there are those who would have gone to a doctor! I know too much about doctors, John Daly!"

" 'Tis truth your reverence says!" Daly agreed, so emphatically that Clark wondered if he had penetrated Stone's disguise. "What with their cuttin' an' hackin', th' Orient saps them of juice. They are shells, I say, an' nothin' more."

He paused, and looked at the imposter eagerly.

"Would you—do something for——"

"For what?"

"Many a year, father, since I've worshipped, but none can say I ever forgot my offering, even if sent by some Jap boy."

"I did not mean that, John Daly. Who is it you wish something done for, man?"

"A dying girl, father."

The barkeeper cracked his thumb-nail against his third finger noisily.

"The mission doctor has said so. Dyin'."

"And what is that to me?" Stone said evenly.

"She is of the Faith, father. And—not as bad as—some."

"Well?"

"And dyin'."

"Is there a price to your whisky, John Daly?"

"Glad I am to give it! And I but said that the girl is goin' where she fears to go."

"She may not. Come—another glass!"

Perspiration beaded the Yokogi surgeon's forehead.

Daly poured.

"She has been here these many years," he told Stone. "Through hard and easy. And none may say I drove her. She come of her own will. All of them have. What they make's their own, but they're free an' easy with it, and 'tis soon gone. Father, as a favor to me, would you say a word to her? It ain't easy, dyin' with a pianner poundin' next your ear! not when you know th' place that's waitin' for you! If you'd but talk to her, 'twould lay her mind, father dear."

"I believe that it would," Stone said sardonically. "I do believe that it would! John Daly, it comes to me that when I'm out among the heathen a bottle of this——"

"I intended offerin' it, father. Can it find a better place? And—you'll talk to th' girl? And possibly lay her fears, even if it isn't—all meant? She'd have no one near, to hear her sins. I asked, father. And, Mary forgive me, I have told her that she's not to die. But she knows. Th' dyin' know, I guess. The mission doctor was none too easy with her. 'You're dyin', woman,' he said. Could he have not lied? Could he have not——"

"Never let it be said that I failed in my duty," Stone said grandly. "I spoke of the bottle to try you, John Daly. Avarice is a sin, my son. Show me the way!"

Clark looked at the other critically, fearsomely. Stone wilted an instant, then chuckled loudly.

"I'll lay her fears," he said bombastically. "Come, man!"

He drained his glass, looked lovingly at the bottle, picked up his bag and Clark's, and stood very erect. His face was now hotly flushed, not red, but a queer gamboge; his steps, however, were regular, steady, pantomimically-clerical in their striding.

"Come and show the way, John Daly," he said. To Clark, in a low voice. "You too, missionary. Let me show you what your parishioners at home send to the Orient. It will do you good."

He laughed diabolically.

"This is better than a play! What parable can you draw around the renegade and the fallen woman?"

STONE was still mumbling to himself as John Daly opened the door of the second-floor room, nor did his apparent enjoyment of the situation cease as he took in the details of the windowless place; a fly-speckled ten-year-old lithograph of September Morn crudely hand-colored in pastel shades; crossed Japanese and American flags, below which Togo and Pershing looked solemnly enough at each other; a nauseous stand littered with half-emptied water-glasses and a gruel bowl where flies banqueted to repletion; a frayed carpet flowered blatantly in yellow. The sickbed itself with ornate headboard of a birds-eye maple, covered with carvings of acanthi intertwined.

Nor did his smile wholly erase as he saw the woman on the bed, and marked the clotted blood on the wall toward which her head was turned.

"She should be happy," he whispered to Clark. "Her troubles are very nearly over, save those of her own making. And mine are just beginning. If I let them. If I let them begin—or be troubles. And I'll never do that. I'll laugh, I tell you! I'll laugh!"

And he did.

" 'Tis the good father himself," Daly told the woman uneasily, half afraid of the reception she would give him. "Bringin' you a word of joy. A good word; hark to him, Maisie child."

The woman brought an eye to bear upon Stone.

"Am—is it that— I'm dying?" she brought out, gasping. "You will not lie to me, father?"

Stone's bleared eyes looked at her keenly. He nodded his head.

"Yes, you're dying," he said coolly.

A spasm racked her.

"If—it were—not my fault—not *all* my fault—will I go—go—" she could not say it.

Stone patted her hand grandly.

"You will go to the same place that I will," he said gravely, unheeding of Clark's shocked face.

She smiled faintly.

"Pray for me," she whispered. "And—then—confess me, father. I am afraid!"

Stone turned to John Daly.

"Out with you," he ordered. "This is between this woman and myself. I'll call when I want you."

Daly nodded, and turned toward Clark.

"Come with me, friend, and leave them," he said. "'Twill be a holy moment."

"My friend stands in the far corner, where he may not hear," Stone commanded harshly. "John Daly, my son, get out. Time flies. Would you have this woman go without——"

When Daly was gone, Stone turned on his companion.

"Pray!" he said tersely.

Clark shook his head.

"Pray!"

Clark looked at him boldly.

"Laugh, doctor!" he whispered. "Laugh! It is a bonny joke! Laugh——"

Stone's face twisted into horrible lines.

"You'd never soil your lips with Latin in prayer," he husked back. "Not you. And I know none for this purpose. And for lack of that——"

"I have prayed for Buddhists, and sent them on their way to Nirvana," Clark retorted. "I have lit tapers before Shinto shrines, and myself collected the tokens to drop in the coffin! More than once I've knelt beside a Roman Catholic priest—and been the better for it! Do you think I'm called the fighting priest for nothing by the Japanese, Stone? I wanted you to see that there's nothing funny here, doctor. Aye, I'll pray——"

And he was at the woman's side, and into the smooth Latin.

She shook her head.

"I want *you*, father," she breathed. "Take—my hand—" Stone took it, biting his lip—"pray for me, father—and I will tell—all there is—to tell."

Clark saw that the other strove desperately for time.

"I—I may be wrong," he muttered to her "Your—cold—may improve."

"Pneumonia—one of the girls said it was And—the mission doctor, too."

"He was right," Stone grunted, stepping back to Clark. "She's dying fast enough. Heaven knows any interne can tell it—when it is advanced as this is! Empyema setting in. Know what that is, missionary? Comes after pneumonia. Patient seems to improve."

He rubbed his chin, and stepped the few paces back to the bed.

"Did this doctor tell you that you were getting better, some time ago?"

A nod.

"The ass!"

He licked his lips.

"A day ago—two, or three—I'd laugh then! but now, I can't. And I'd need more than instruments."

He turned his back on the woman, and looked wearily at Clark.

"Remember how I said I felt, when I was younger? When I operated? I feel different about it, now. I feel like interposing against Him. Setting my skill against His! But it's too late. Her lungs are filling up. They fill. Good-by patient. That's what's happening here. Pulse's strong; good heart, or she'd be gone now. She'll be unconscious soon. Hours after that—finish."

The woman's fingers sought Stone's hand again. The man's face ran the gamut from carmine to white, and ended ashen.

"Tell me again, father," she pleaded. "That I'll not—be damned——"

"No more than I."

"Say it—differently, father. Tell me—of heaven—tell me of that. Purgatory I can—stand, but not—that other."

Stone's hands shook.

"The play is nearly over," Clark reminded him grimly. "You were so proud of your part; act it out!"

The doctor's hands fumbled together.

His head sunk, and suddenly he blurted—"I'm done. I'm going— I can listen to no more——"

The woman caught that 'I'm going;' her seeking hands flung out.

"Never leave me," she pleaded. "It was—not all—my fault, father. There was a man——"

"Silence!" Clark shouted.

The girl did not understand. She seemed insensible to everything save Stone.

"She's confessing to you, you scoundrel," the missionary grated; stopped, glaring at the other.

"And why not?" Stone answered smoothly. "Why not? Am I not what I am? She sees me, does she not? Am I some myth? some fiction? some fable? She trusts me. Asks me to help."

Every trace of indecision was wiped from the surgeon's face, the loose, aimless hands gripped together.

"She tells me to creep up to Death, and stop him for her! Aye, Clark—I do believe I'm drunk again. That whisky's gone to my head. Watch a fool prevent a Fool from carrying out His will! They said that when I was drunk ——, was mine the only lip to touch the bottle in Yokogi? Mine the only lyin' mouth?"

He burst into a loud laugh that ended in a miserable quack.

"Do what I tell you, understand? Or you will become a fable, like the Ronin, for I'll——"

He made his hands into talons, and, forgetful already of the threat, pounded on the door.

"Boiling water," he told John Daly, who came running to answer. "A tub of it! Boiling water, and get it fast."

"A toddy, is it, father? Shall I bring rye or bourbon? 'Twill go better than th' Irish!"

"For a toddy? For a bath, a shave, for washing the floor, to take the bristles off a pig's back. For anything you like, but bring it fast!"

He groped for the instrument bag, opened it, and selected several shining things from it; a series of knives, from narrow blade to broad, from large to small; a packet of gauze, cotton, a heavy sharp shears.

"Where's Daly?" he asked the wall. "I won't wait for him, or I'll loose what nerve——"

He took out a small-necked can, shaped like a bottle of rum, and bent over the woman.

"I am going to help you," he said. "Don't ask why. Or how. Here—" the gauze over her face—"breathe deeply, daughter. Deeply—deeply—" drops of ether—"breathe deeply—so—" more ether—"so—deeply——"

He glared around at Clark.

"Come here, missionary! Watch how I'm doing this. See? Drop by drop. You are going to help me foil your Master from now on! There's Daly. Get the water. Put the instruments into it. Get out, Daly. Shut the door. Thanks.

"Put in all the instruments I took from the bag, Clark. Set that ether can nearer, so we can both reach it. I'll take instruments as I want them. Or ask you. See that long one? That's a sponge-holder. The one beside it? Clamp for veins. I'll tell you what to do. You've got to do it, as well as keep her under. Do what I say, that's the main thing! She insisted upon me, when you could have prayed for her, and me she is going to have, I tell you! I'm going to drain this filling lung. Cut out section of rib first. Won't be pretty sight—

"Sleep, child—breathe deeply—deeply—"

He straightened up.

"There! She's under. Now, Clark, I'm ready as I'll ever be. Drop by drop with that ether, and stop when I tell you to. Don't miss a word. If her heart doesn't go back on her, or a million other things don't happen——"

Stone plunged his hand into the tin pan of water, bringing out a thin knife. The hand burned red in the water, but he did not wince.

"Sterile, that hand," Clark heard him snap, and then the knife slipped softly into flesh.

Then orders, and more orders. Sweat dripped from the doctor's head, from the ill-ventilated room; he blinked again and again as it ran into his eyes, but never stopped. His commands came steadily, and easily understood by Clark; never technically, but always simple. In the silences between, the mechanical piano ground:

She's a weepy—creepy widow
In the sa-a-a-able garb o' woe;
She's a helpless hapless creature
As she wants you a-l-l-l-l to know——

The bed upon which Stone worked was blood-soaked; the thin, hairy arms of the surgeon were red, drying at the upper edges with clotted maroon patches.

Orders, more orders, and always the drop-drop-drop of the ether upon the gauze. The whine of the piano, and the shrilling of voices when it was a moment mute.

The room became dense, terrible from the ether fumes. More than once Clark felt his head reeling, and several times the whole impossible scene became black. Yet he was able, uncannily, to follow Stone's terse directions instantly; a clamp here, an instrument there, a wad of cotton—another, another, another, and finally a long supple rubber tube.

"I'm done," Stone breathed at last. "And I'm drunk—drunk——"

He sat upon the floor where he had stood, discarded instruments all about him, a steel *chevaux-de-frise.*

"Let her come out now," he told Clark unsteadily. "And get John Daly. I want a drink!"

Clark watched the woman stagger and slip back into a dim, semi-conscious world bit by bit, her first intelligible word a wail for the priest.

"I brought her back!" Stone said gratingly, as he rose limply to his feet. "She'll be half-conscious for hours. But she's got a chance, I say. I, Stone, of Yokogi! My knives cut the thread of the Fates, I tell you," he mumbled, and began muttering to himself so Clark could hear: "I'll tell Daly I'm a medical priest. He doesn't go about. He'll never know. None of the whites here have anything to do with him, and he's not seen a real priest for a long time. He'll know no better. She's got to be nursed for a day—or several, if she lasts. And I'll keep her here! *I'll* keep her, no matter who calls!"

He blinked his eyes open.

"You still here, missionary? Better do some prayin', after this night!"

Clark mumbled something to himself.

"What? At it already?" Stone flashed. "Bah! Who did this? I, by myself. My skill! Mine, that I learned, and can use, missionary, drunk or sober. Now—get me John Daly—with his bottle. We must have spilled the other—or did we bring it—or did I ever see it—or—" his eyes half-closed, but he snapped, in strangely alert voice—"get Daly, missionary!"

Clark nodded dumb agreement, dazed from it all, and stumbled from the room, glad of even the stale outer air, heavy with scents, after the stingingly-sweet odor of confined ether.

He was unable to find the dim stairway, the rear passage, up which Daly had led them before, and, instead, discovered himself in the dance-hall. Loud laughter greeted him, and with it at his back he fumbled his way down the white-and-gilt foyer, once so bright and now so tarnished, and down into the barroom, to leave Stone's order with John Daly.

* * *

IT WAS on the exact day, and within a half-hour of the time, that Gilbert Clark intended departure to Osaka that a summons came. Twice the missionary had taken evening walks, each of which ended at John Daly's Place; twice John Daly had told him gravely that Father Grady had left no word for him, no word save that he desired to see no one. Nor would the barkeeper vouchsafe any further comment as to how the woman progressed, save to say that she was still alive, the Saints be praised.

A tattered Japanese urchin brought it, this summons. "Please come at once," it read, and bore no signature save a scrawled S.

The Hishiura missionary had said nothing of Dr. Stone. He felt, and rightly, that the mission doctor would immediately go to Daly's, and that an unpleasant scene would ensue. And, after having seen Stone at work, he realized that, drunk or not, the man was capable. He realized more, perhaps—and wondered more than once what was happening. Not to the girl. To Stone.

He fluttered to his feet when the message was brought.

"I may miss my train," he told the Chosizen missionaries. "Will one of you see to my reservation? Please have it changed. To the night train. I—I have a call——"

"At this late hour, Clark? Some friend of yours? I didn't know you were acquainted here. And there's been no boat in," one of the men protested. "Hard to get a berth on the night train now."

Clark was never one to dissemble.

"A friend," he agreed.

"I'll call a *kuruma,*" his host decided. "Make better time than walking, and possibly you can get the afternoon train anyhow. Where are you going?"

"To John Daly's," Clark said.

"A friend? Stopping there?" incredulously. "Why, Clark, that's the most damnable sink-hole, the worst den of iniquity, the horridest sore in all Chosizen! I went there to see a woman I'd heard in some roundabout way was sick" (this the first mention of her, from them or Clark) "and I can tell you it is the vilest of the vile!"

"All of that," Clark said placidly. "All of that, and more. I may see this girl, Masterson, and"—softly—"possibly help her."

"Help her? Don't be a fool, Clark! She's dead by now, and Daly—the scamp!—has covered it up, so it will not spoil his—trade!"

"No," Clark disagreed. "She is dying, doubtless, but not dead. Now, will you call a rickshaw or must I walk?"

Out of the room, the others shook their heads: one day Clark would go too far. There was such a thing as carrying endeavor out of all decent bounds, and some day Clark would discover that.

But Gilbert Clark, bouncing along in the mission *kuruma*, was not worried about that.

John Daly met him, and took him up the stairs at once.

"Is she dying?" Clark asked immediately, already conjuring up the difficult Latin words that he must use.

"Dyin', is it? Never. Father Grady"—Clark blinked at that—"has pulled her through her trouble, with the assistance of th' angels, I do believe, for the good man does love his bottle, which is nothin' against him—there, see for yourself."

The woman was in bed. He saw her now as if for the first time. A thin, haggard woman, of possibly forty. Large, distressed, observant eyes, under dark eyebrows drawn with precise straightness till they neared the bridge of her nose and there turning downward abruptly, thin and white-lipped mouth, cloudy hair with no shine nor sparkle, narrow and pointed chin, her body drained of all fresh color and robbed of flesh, and, despite all that, she was recovering. Stone entered before the missionary's embarrassed scrutiny was complete.

"Come into my room," he said soberly, which soberness was utterly belied by the red-rimmed eyes. "Well"—in a similar airless cubby-hole—"you see me drunk again. Looks natural, eh? She's recovering! She shouldn't have had a chance in ten million. According to the best lung men—but here she is, and growing better. You can't argue against that, Clark. And I told her I'd take her to the Sisters' hospital, where they'd care for her. *I* told her that!"

"Is that any reason to make me miss my train?" Clark asked. "Take her, then."

"Don't be a fool, missionary."

"What is so foolish about that?"

"I *can't*."

"Take her? Why not?"

Stone rubbed moist palms together.

"She is recovering, I told you. Slowly. Excitement will set her back. Or kill her."

"Then don't excite her. Put her off for a few days."

"I have done that already," Stone said miserably.

"What would you have me do?"

"Will you go to the convent—the hospital section—and—ask them——"

"Well? Go on."

Stone fumbled for a cigaret, lighted it, and found the tube stuck to his dry lips.

"Ask them— when I bring her—to call me—to call me father. I've tried—Lord, how I've tried!—to put her off. Until she was strong enough to stand a shock. That's why I've gone ahead with the part I'm playing. I've kept out of sight, for fear some one will know me for what I am. For what I'm not, I mean. I keep in my room. Or hers. Only Daly's seen me, and he's satisfied I'm a priest. I *had* to, Clark! If she'd found me out, it would have been a terrible shock to her. I only think surgically about it, man! To her system. I couldn't help hearing her story. She thought she was conf—" he tore the cigaret apart between his fingers—"ask them, will you?" he pleaded. "It can not hurt them, and the Sisters can help the poor girl."

Clark gulped.

"Aye," he said. "I'll ask."

"I promised to take her today," Stone insisted feverishly. "I've got to get it over with now. If you'd gone—" he found a second cigaret and held it loosely—"if you'd left Chosizen, I'd have——"

His voice dwindled, and fell silent.

"I'll go," Clark assured him. "Do you wait a few minutes. Five or ten. Then follow me. I came in a rickshaw. You use it for the girl. I'll walk. It isn't far. I've passed it, when I walked out to see you and you wouldn't—there, that's over. Just remember; give me time to get there ahead of you."

"If—if—" Stone averted his eyes—"if—they refuse——"

"If they will not, they will not. Pull yourself together. I'm on my way now. Follow as I said. I'll speak to the rickshaw-boy—the *kurumaya*, they call him, on this coast—and tell him to go carefully so the woman isn't bumped."

Clark patted the other's arm.

"We're none so evil as we wish to be at times," he said gently as he left.

Dr. Stone picked at his collar with distasteful fingers. Why hadn't he asked Clark to bring another? John Daly didn't look at such things as collars, and he had kept this as clean as possible—he'd wipe it again, very carefully, and perhaps it wouldn't look so miserably grimy.

He found as many tasks as he could, but, notwithstanding, panic choked him; he sat at last on the edge of his cot, cheeks pressed against the wall. Some girl in an adjacent room moaned in her daytime sleep, and he placed his hands over his ears to shut out the insistent sound. Excepting the sleeping girl John Daly's was very quiet; you could hear the soft piping of a blind *masseuse* in the streets, promising bodily soothing and comfort, could hear a vender of *oden* shouting his pasty ware.

Ten minutes passed, and Stone stood erect, and did not falter as he crossed the hall to the woman's room, but his eyes were fever-bright and his color strangely high; twitches played like lightning across his face.

Once in the woman's room he said nothing, but quickly, defiantly, he wrapped blankets about her, and very gently raised her from the bed. John Day smiled at him as man and burden passed rapidly through the barroom.

"It is good of you, father," the woman breathed, as he placed her in the two-wheeled vehicle and arranged blankets about her. "So much trouble for so little as I."

Stone had no answer for that.

Of the short trip through the filthy streets, of the curious eyes, he knew nothing, nor of his ringing the porter's bell at the convent gate. But the garden told him what no other sense was able; that he was about to face what he must face.

No rock garden here, nor stunted pines, nor lotus-pool arched by curved-back bridge; no dragon-writhing pot bearing miniature orange-tree; a trim little hedge of box, but behind it, in glorious profusion, marigold and late-blooming spicy carnation, with tall sunflowers nodding in the rear. Bees hummed; the very sun seemed gentler, as if every fiery ray were saved for the mean streets outside.

Somehow he passed through the garden, and to the door of the building. He staggered slightly as he stood on the second of the three steps while the door opened for him; his uneasy eyes never glanced at the portress, but instead picked out a lounge in the hall; he stepped up, took a pace or two, and bent to deposit his burden.

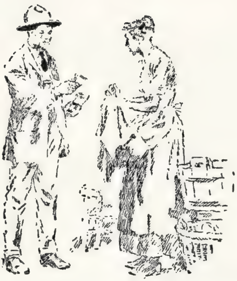
"It is a very sick woman I am bring you for nursing, sister," he said steadily, in a low voice.

The nun laid her hand on the man's bent head.

"I thank you for her, father," she whispered.

And Stone, recognizing the double-turned meaning, gulped hard, licked his lips, bit them deeply, and, unable to speak, found the door into the garden again where—behind a tree—Clark awaited him.

Together, the two white men left the place of spicy carnation and marigold; together, Clark's arm about the other's shaking shoulders tightly.



The GILA KID

by E. S. Pladwell

Author of "The Education of Edgar," "Sweet Friendship," etc.

A RED sun arose on the desert and promised ferocious heat. Two men emerged from a sagebrush cañon and crossed a divide which cut through funereal gray-brown mountains and afforded a view of countless miles of valley and plain below the hills.

The men, blear-eyed from recent sleep, bore packs and canteens. Around their middles were cartridge-belts and pendant six-shooters. One of the men was middle-aged, broad of face and the owner of a splendid black beard. His body was heavy and powerful. The other was younger, slighter and blonder, slim of jaw, blue of eye and beardless of chin. Both men were travel-stained and covered with dust. Both were clad in worn boots, worn blue trousers, soiled shirts and tattered hats. They were prospectors, moderately successful, making for "town."

Far down the yellow slope they could see the settlement. It stood like three tiny oblongs in the center of a whitish flat surrounded by blobs of green brush. The buildings occupied three sides of a square. The walls, adobe, gleamed yellow-gray in the morning sunlight and sent long shadows westward. One of the structures was a store, an adventurous trading-post set in the middle of nowhere. The other two buildings were lesser ones.

They were nearly eight miles away. In a half-hour they would be completely jiggled out of proportion by the shimmering heat-wave; but now the scene was fairly clear, so clear that certain unusual happenings attracted the instant attention of the two men coming over the pass. They halted.

"Injuns!" exclaimed the bearded man in a bass voice.

Tiny flashes sparkled near the buildings. Tiny figures moved from under the long shadows of the gray-green brush. Tiny spurts of fire darted from the houses. Little clouds of whitish smoke arose like puffballs. A horse broke from the quadrangle and moved into the brush. It soon subsided.

"Surrounded!" observed the younger man. "They're gone!"

"Yeh!"

The older man, with a sigh, laid down his pack and seated himself on it.

"That's hard luck. Hard luck for everybody!" he added.

His intelligent brown eyes stared at the distant scene.

"It looks like our finish!"

The younger man—nicknamed the "Gila Kid," an uncouth citizen but reformed by chance into an honest prospector who liked his partner—also seated himself on his blanket-rolls. He made an unconscious motion to his pockets.

"No tobacco!" he observed dejectedly.

"No," agreed the older man. "No tobacco, no grub, nothin'. And Yuma's a hundred mile away and more!"

They watched the distant drama silently.

The flashes increased in rapidity. Prowling forms advanced little by little upon the buildings. There was a rush. The flashes became frantic. White powder-smoke swelled around the corners of the buildings.

Then came a deeper and more permanent flame. It arose to the roofs and spread, a red-brown glow which soon ate through the windows. Dark smoke collected under the eaves and started in a long column which marched toward the skies. The courtyard became alive with moving figures.

There were dramas there—deadly little short-range episodes, worthy of a Croix de Guerre; but this was a different sort of show. This was only an isolated affair, one of the minor birth-pangs of the thousands which were to bring forth the White Man's West.

The roof caved in.

"It's over," observed the bearded man. "Now mebbe the next will be *us*. We'd better move back."

They retreated just over the ridge, cautiously, and sat on their warm packs again.

"How many Injuns?" wondered the older man.

"Fifty."

"Uh-huh. That's about what I figgered. Now what?"

"Yuma, I suppose," said the younger man without taking his glance from the ground.

There was a long silence. The older man sighed. He stood up, reached into his pack and brought forth a canteen. It gurgled pleasantly when he shook it.

"All that's left," he observed with a peculiar intonation to his voice. "One canteen, two men, one hundred miles."

The Gila Kid still studied the hot yellow rocks at his feet. The country was starting to radiate heat already. His boots were getting warm.

"We gotta do the best we can," he mumbled.

His voice was high-pitched, almost boyish. His face seemed dully hopeless and baffled, as if he had tried to find some way out of this evil situation but couldn't see the slightest encouragement. He would have been glad to find hope in the darker man's broad face, but when he looked up he saw nothing but an expression of stark terror!

The boy looked again. He wondered if he had seen aright. The bearded man, John Harper, had suddenly changed from a powerful and somewhat aggressive man into an ashen-faced coward with eyes that bulged and threatened to pop!

"My gosh!" yelled the startled Kid.

"I've been through it once before!" quavered Harper.

The bearded man took a long breath. His eyes held a hunted look. His body seemed to tremble. He spoke hoarsely:

"I can't stand it! I can't stand it! I know what it means! You don't; you couldn't! To crawl over a hot country with your tongue hanging out— Delirium— No! No!"

John Harper's eyes suddenly glinted with resolution; a stubborn, half-mad resolution which made the younger man sit up and stare.

"Here!" snarled Harper. "Listen!"

He went very close to the bewildered youth and bent over him.

"It's you or me. See? You or me. We can't blink at facts. It's one or the other!"

"You're losin' your nerve!" shouted the Kid.

The Kid had never dreamed of anything like this. He had found Harper to be a solid, practical partner, a man who looked ahead, a man who had even calculated their water supply so they could work their little claim to the last minute and then hike forty miles to the settlement. And the calculation was correct. They were in sight of the settlement and still had one full canteen!

But now Harper was a different man.

"Don't git so panicky!" yelled the Kid, striving to arise. "You're goin' off your head!"

Harper flung him back.

The Kid, thoroughly alarmed, reached toward his hip. Harper's hairy hand twisted the Kid's slim wrist aside, extracted the shining Colt from the Kid's holster and tucked the weapon under his belt. The Kid glared savagely. He tried to speak, but was speechless.

John Harper did the talking.

"I hate to!" he muttered. "Hate to! I wouldn't do this if there was any way out, Kid. I couldn't. But it's me or you. Me or you. There's no other way out. No other town. No other waterhole. Nothin'. And I—I've got a wife and baby, Kid; you haven't."

The bearded man waved his powerful hands in a little gesture of finality. His eyes were moist and couldn't look into the Kid's. He spoke with the sympathy of a judge delivering a death-sentence against his own will. But fear was above sympathy. John Harper glanced for a moment at the copper-blue sky and at the gleaming rocks and sand; and in his face was a sheer terror that no feeling of sympathy could erase.

"I couldn't stand it!" he bawled. "It would be torture for both of us! Not enough water for both, not enough water for one——"

"Let's toss for it then!" offered the Kid.

"No!"

The bearded man clenched his big hands.

"No! I've got a wife and baby! I've got to live!"

The Kid stared at him. The Kid's whole opinion of Harper was undergoing a violent change.

"And how about me?" inquired the Kid.

Harper made another helpless gesture. The Kid's slim face contorted in a sneer.

"Oh. You'll take the water and leave me to die slow! So that's it!"

The Kid jumped up in spite of the holding hand.

"You dirty coward! Leavin' me here to die! You low-down skunk!"

John Harper's white face showed no resentment.

"I know. You're right. But I can't stand it. A wife and baby! There's nothing else to do!"

It was life against life. Harper had made it that way. The Kid was forced to make his decisions. He made a swift dive for the stronger man's belt. His hand reached the weapon, but his wrist was twisted aside. He found himself flung off easily; so he subsided on his blankets and glared.

"Leavin' me even without a gun!" he sneered. "You dirty dawg! You low-down coward!"

"No. You'll get your gun. See that blue rock stickin' out of the side of that sagebrush hill yonder? It's about two miles away. I'll leave your gun on the rock. You can come and get it when I'm gone."

The Kid arose desperately. He knew the desert, too.

"No!" he yelled, flinging out his arms. "Kill me now! Put me out of it! Here—through the heart."

He noted the other man turned away.

"You sneak—you yellow-livered skunk, you can't even *kill* a man clean!"

"I can't!" mumbled Harper, looking at the ground. "I can't!"

Slowly he bent over, lifted his pack and hitched it to his broad shoulders, not caring to prolong the scene.

"I'll follow you!" promised the Kid. "Even to the end of the earth!"

"No!"

John Harper turned again.

"I couldn't stand it; it would break me all up——"

The Kid's blue eyes bulged incredulously.

"For Heaven's sake!"

The Kid felt he was enacting a drama which wasn't rational. Here was a new sort of villain, a man who was deserting his partner and perpetrating the most ghastly act of selfishness and cruelty known to the desert; and *feeling sincerely sorry about it!*

But Harper was not acting. He was genuine. He had gone mad from thirst once before in the desert. The memory of its agony subordinated every other thought and feeling. Since that episode he had calculated his distances and waterholes with a caution that was almost fanatical. He had never erred until now. And now? Now he was facing the one thing that he could not face!

"Let's wait till the Injuns go," suggested the Kid mildly.

"We can't. They'll stay. You know that. They'll open the whisky-barrels. They'll bury the well. You know Injuns."

"All right. I'll follow you!"

Harper's baffled eyes flashed with determination again.

"No! I'll have to bind you then. I'll bind you just long enough till I can get a start!"

The Kid, white-faced, backed away.

"Crazy!" he yelled. "Schemin' to leave me alone out here—bound, no water, no grub, ants, Injuns, heat—John, John, are you a *devil?*"

"There's only one canteen," mumbled Harper with dreary stubbornness. "I've been through it before. I've got a wife and baby. It's no use, Kid; but I'm trying to give you a chance."

"A *chance!*"

"There's mighty little chance for anybody. One canteen!"

Harper studied for a moment, then—

"I've got our gold in my poke; about three thousand dollars; half of it's yours——"

"Gold!" sneered the Kid. "Gold!"

And then he started swearing.

Harper sighed.

"But if you try to follow me I'll have to tie you down. Good-by."

Harper unconsciously put out his hand; but he dropped it almost before the movement was observed. The Kid stood like a statue. His blue eyes were cold.

"You tin-horn! You short sport! My *pardner!*"

John Harper did not face him. The larger man shouldered his pack, turned and tramped away; and soon he was a tiny figure stalking toward the blue-gray rock on the brushy side-hill. He reached the rock. He stayed some little time, and then he laid something on it. He turned and waved. He disappeared over the curve of the ridge.

THEN the Kid moved.

He abandoned his useless pack and ran as swiftly as his heavy boots allowed. He raced over the stony hillside in a mad endeavor to reach that blue rock and grasp his weapon for vengeance. His motionless attitude in front of Harper had been a pose to fool Harper into thinking the Kid was resigned to his fate. Perhaps Harper might travel more slowly because of it!

The Kid was now playing every tiny chance. It was as Harper had said; his life or the Kid's. Harper had put it that way. Harper had forced this issue. The Kid had no alternative but to fight and scheme.

And for what? For one canteen of water! Not safety, but merely one slim chance to struggle through!

"My *pardner!*" sobbed the Kid.

The heat slowed him down. Before he reached that rock his body was wet with perspiration and his heart thumped madly. He arrived almost exhausted; but he leaped for the six-shooter and felt a thrill when his hand touched its hot metal.

It was all taken apart.

The chambers were unloaded and unhinged. They were concealed behind a smaller rock some distance away, to cause a search before they could be found. The handles on the frame were unscrewed and the spring extracted. Handles, screws and spring were laid in orderly array on the rock; but it would take time to reassemble them.

"Tricked!" whimpered the Kid. "My *pardner!*"

His mouth was dry and cottony already, craving more moisture because of the wild dash to the blue rock. But even this did not prevent a flow of sizzling profanity.

"Yeh—he planned it all out—the sneak—the forsaken sneak! Wait till I get him! *Wait!*"

But it took time to put that weapon together. Salty, sticky sweat poured down from the Kid's eyebrows and helped to delay him. He thought of water; one good drink; one swallow from that canteen. His eyes flashed balefully. But when the pistol was finally together he was less keen about vengeance. The odds were too great.

John Harper had kept going. He was not fooled by the Kid's quiet attitude. Harper had walked as fast as his legs could go. The Kid saw him once, far down the side of the hill. Harper had gained two or three miles.

But the Kid went after him.

He labored down the hillside. He struggled into a deep, hot, yellow cañon where Harper's tracks were plain on the blistering sand and rocks. The Kid lurched along the cañon until it became a gorge with chalk-white sides, where the sun-glare reflected and the heat became oven-like.

By now the Kid's tongue was hanging out. The first phases of delirium touched his brain. Once he laughed, and the silent, white cañon echoed his laugh as if a thousand fire-demons lurked in the curves of the fluted white walls which arose above him.

He struggled onward. He got out of the cañon somehow and into the hot, brushy hills above a broad valley. By now he was traveling on hands and knees, with a piteous tongue hanging out. The trail of Harper was lost. The Kid's consciousness was leaving him. He fell into the shade of a clump of brush. Through some last flickering instinct of self-preservation he noted that the heat was less agonizing here; so he stayed.

He saw queer things after that. There were hob-goblins and twisted fantoms coming out of the land of Lethe. Later in the afternoon, when the shade of the brush fell for long distances across the yellow ground, he felt a presence near him. His open eyes saw it, a weird, distorted object which looked like nothing human or decent. The thing began talking to him, jeering at him. He sat up. Just beyond the brush he observed a face that was cruel, sardonic, triumphant; a were-wolf from the grim fairy-tales of his babyhood; a taunting demon that was grinning, grinning, grinning!

The Kid grabbed his six-shooter madly. He held it up in his trembling hands and fired four times. Smoke-rings obscured the leering object and it subsided. So did the Kid.

When he next awoke he was cold. He had lived miraculously through the heat of the day, and now the chill night was upon him. A brilliant array of stars glared down at him. He stared back and then, shaken by their inflexible disinterest, he decided to move away.

He began to crawl around the brush. He almost made the circle, after forgetting why he had started. His hand touched something soft and furry. He stopped. He touched the thing again. It wasn't hard and scaly, like a rattlesnake; it was soft. It had weight and bulk. Something to drink, perhaps. Yes, that was it. Something to drink. That was all the Kid's blurred mind could think about!

The Kid weakly drew his jack-knife and plugged it, as if it were a watermelon.

Strangely, it yielded a drink. There was something unusual and unpalatable about it, as the Kid half-consciously observed. Not satisfying moisture; but plenty of it!

Soon the Kid was somewhat sick, but in a few hours he was much better.

"Saved by a coyote!" he murmured, as he made ready to depart. "Left by a coyote, and then saved by one! Funny! Darned funny!"

He banked his little fire and left. He decided to travel by night, guiding himself by the stars. He was now nearly in possession of his full faculties.

He lurched across the big valley, finding himself on another brushy hillside when dawn came. He gathered pungent sage over himself, took off his clothes, laid his six-shooter close to hand and strove to live through the day and fight off the eternal torture which comes from thinking of water.

Exhaustion helped him. He slept long. He dreamed of cool brooks and rippling cascades amid pleasant greenery. His mind did not start to wander until late, some time after he awoke; and then, licking parched lips, he forced himself to keep alert in the hope of another four-legged miracle.

None came.

He tortured himself, straining anxious eyes for the sight of some living thing. Even a rattler.

Nothing met his eyes except the desolate country and the burning sun-glare.

At last, far down the slope, he thought he saw something moving. He aimed and pulled trigger. The pistol kicked in his hand. The report cracked over the hills. Nothing happened.

"Buncoed!" he groaned. "I'm seein' things!"

He laid back in his brush-pile and turned his disappointed head away, to the right.

A sudden flash of brown and black came into his vision.

It was an Indian, moving cautiously around the curve of the hill to see where the shot came from! The echoes in a near-by cañon had been conflicting; and now the Indian, walking furtively and looking in every direction, made a few steps toward the Kid. The Kid lifted himself.

It all happened within the split fraction of a second. The Indian's head, turning in a half-circle, allowed his eyes to sweep the near-by landscape. The eyes took in the brush-pile and saw a flash of white skin under the sage.

There were no amenities observed.

The naked white man and the clothed Indian with a greasy band around his forehead had met. Their minds sprang to battle before even their quick muscles could move. The winner was sure to win and the loser sure to lose. It was that sort of a war.

The Indian tried to swing down the rifle slung over his shoulder. The white man had only to reach into his holster and turn his wrist. The Indian was incredibly swift. The white man was slower than usual; much slower; but he pumped five shots into the brown body before the Indian could level the rifle.

The Indian walked straight backward for fifteen feet as the heavy forty-five caliber slugs hammered into his body.

"Mebbe he's got somethin'!" chattered the naked white man as he staggered to the brown corpse lying face upward on the ground. The matter of other possible Indians never struck the Kid just then. He never thought of it. He was on a quest.

The Indian had something. He was apparently a lone scout. In the pocket of his black shirt was some dried meat, and hitched to his belt was a white man's canteen, half full!

* * *

THE Kid won his way to the Colorado River.

There were dispensations on the way; small miracles in the shape of jackrabbits and one unsuspected waterhole; but despite these kindnesses the Kid was faded to a ninety-pound whisper by the time his dazzled eyes caught the flash of water among the glaring yellow hills and drywashes. His face was thinner, covered with a dry skin tight as parchment. His body was gaunt and bony. His ribs stuck out on a chest where a few strands of tattered shirt remained. His torn boots flopped about legs so thin that they could hardly bear his weight. He didn't walk. He lurched.

But the muddy river made a difference. He dived, bathed, swallowed and wallowed. He made himself sick. He tried to drink the whole river in the next day or so, and the river gave him gripes; but finally, with new resolution, he swung southward, never letting the precious stream get out of his sight. At times he gave a sudden happy yelp and dived into it head first. Sort of a celebration.

At length he came to a ranch. He partook of civilized food and stocked a gunnysack. His strength grew. By the time he reached the first square adobe house of old Yuma he was normal in mind and heart, though his body still bore the ravages of his terrible journey.

As he sighted the town, he wondered if Harper had won through. That started him thinking of Harper.

A married man with a baby. Well, that *did* make a difference. After all, now that it was all over, the Kid was able to make allowances for Harper. Harper could never be a partner again; certainly not; he had failed in the time of trial; but as for *blaming* Harper—well, the man had acted according to his lights. He had a duty to his partner and a duty to his wife and child. The latter had won. All right. The Kid was in a mood to forget it. His heart was patting juba. He had come through the most ferocious ordeal that man can endure; and now he was safe, sound and sane. That atoned for all, though Yuma was hot as an oven and the next meal was a matter for conjecture.

The Kid made his way past sun-blistered adobe houses whose inmates were trying to gasp through their mid-afternoon *siestas*. He went to the main streets where rows of saloons and resorts stood silent, with porches deserted and with drowsy bartenders loafing inside. He journeyed to a gambling-house owned by a near acquaintance; and there he finally joined the general snore.

Evening came. Old Yuma changed. As if to make up for its lassitude, the town became a riotous place full of lively citizens who wanted their pleasures raw. The streets began to teem with riders, miners, gamblers, merchants, tinhorns, Indians with colorful blankets and drunkards with colorful faces. The jangle of music vied with the click of chips. The lights of a thousand lamps illumined the dirt streets where horses were tethered in rows, champing their enormous Mexican bits.

The Kid made the rounds of the resorts. Having no money, he asked for some and got it. This was old Yuma, part of the old frontier, where no man ever went hungry for lack of a careless loan. The Kid ate well and met friends. In time he staked a few dollars on the tables; and borrowed again. He met other friends, and they had drinks. The Kid—as was the fashion in those deplorable days of hospitality—became mildly jingled.

He refrained from mentioning his terrific recent ordeal. He didn't even think of it. He couldn't have found an audience anyhow. Hard-luck stories and sob stuff were passé, probably because they were so usual!

The Kid drifted into a squalid Mexican place where peppers hung down from the low roof like strings of red bananas and a *señorita* of uncertain charms stamped and grimaced to the thrumming of a guitar. He watched for a time; and then, bored, he strolled to the dirt street where the moonlight turned the pebbles to diamonds and the buildings of old Yuma became mystic squares of white standing starkly out of black shadows.

The squalling of a concertina came to his ears. He looked up to a dark awning-covered balcony where cigars and cigarets glowed redly in comparison with the white brilliance of the stars above the awning.

The concertina swung into a lively tune. Some one laughed. A woman's musical voice joined in. From behind the lighted balcony doors came more voices and the click of poker-chips, heard plainly even at this distance.

The Kid turned his booted feet in that direction.

He rounded the building and mounted a creaky wooden stairway which ran up along the outside wall. He reached the top landing and turned the open doorway, stepping into a crowded environment of men, women, gambling-tables, bar, bottles, talk, drinkers, and watchers ranged in seats along the wall. Tobacco-smoke eddied thickly through the place. A layer of it was fanned aside when the Kid's body passed. He stopped and looked around. Finally he turned toward the busy gambling-tables. He had twelve dollars.

He shouldered into a crowd surrounding a roulette layout. He laid his money on a number. He produced papers and tobacco and started rolling a cigaret while waiting for the dealer to spin the big wheel.

A powerful, hairy hand reached to the table at some distance from the Kid and laid three gold-pieces on a square. The Kid's attention became concentrated. Harper! So Harper had won through!

The wheel started turning. A thousand sizzling thoughts passed through the Kid's mind as the colorful wheel flashed its rainbow hues; but one thought became paramount; a sense of outrage. How about that wife and baby *now?* Harper had apparently forgotten the matter!

Suddenly the Kid shoved through the crowd and lifted Harper's gold-pieces off the squares on the table.

"Hey!" yelled the dealer.

Harper stiffened. His head turned quickly. His eyes met the Kid's. He gasped.

"*You!*"

"Yeh. Me."

Harper looked unbelieving.

"I'm glad you made it," he said slowly.

"Yeh; but how about *this?*" inquired the Kid with a gesture toward the wheel, which was slowing down.

"This?"

Harper did not understand.

"What about it?"

"Just this! You threw down your pardner. You took that canteen o' water because you had to live. All right. That's fair enough. You left the Kid to die, for your wife and baby. All right. We'll say he's dead. Died for a wife and baby. *But he didn't die for a roulette wheel! Sabe?*"

There was silence. Folks stepped back somewhat. The wheel stopped. The little marble slipped into place and the dealer announced the winner. It was neither Harper nor the Kid; but neither noticed. They were eying each other strangely.

"Did you send your money to your wife?" inquired the Kid.

"Well—" Harper took his time—"maybe that's not exactly your business, Kid."

"No? Well, it is! You'd better quit gamblin' for a while!"

"You're moral all of a sudden!" observed Harper mildly.

"No! I ain't! But I'm dead, see? I'm lyin' out yonder in the hills, see? I'm not kickin'. I died for a good reason. There's some *style* about that. But, by ——, I wasn't thrown away for *nothin'*. No, sir! You git away from this table or I'll blow you through that wall!"

The crowd backed away hastily. Harper's face reddened, then whitened. He seemed to calculate.

"Half that three thousand is yours," he admitted slowly. "You can have it."

Then his voice became decisive, almost biting.

"But when you try to dictate what I'll do with my own money you've got another think coming!"

"Hey!" bawled the owner of the place, coming through the crowd. "Stop that. You people are holdin' up the game!"

The Kid, at this distraction, twitched his head around slightly. It was hardly noticeable, but in that instant Harper decided to act. He may have felt a sudden cold fear of the Kid. He may have intended to kill, or he may have planned to get the drop on the Kid and run him out of the place. The Kid never waited to find out.

He didn't actually see Harper's arm reach downward. He *felt* it with his catlike nerves. His own right hand twitched and—flash, flash—he saw Harper reel backward through a cloud of flame and smoke!

"Hey!" shrieked the proprietor.

The crowd shrank away or dived under chairs and tables. The smoke thinned. Harper, staggering backward, reached the doorway. He sank to his knees. Stubbornly he yanked the six-shooter from his holster and brought it in to line.

The Kid fired again. The shot throbbed like a blast through the room. The lamps flickered.

Harper arose to his full height, spread out his arms, walked slowly back to the landing and struck the wooden rail, which came just under his thighs. The rail bent. Harper's body circled over it and disappeared to the street below.

The Gila Kid stood alone in a cleared space in front of the roulette table.

"This here's private!" he announced to the crowd. "Keep off it!"

He strode to the doorway, watching vigilantly lest some fool should try to interfere. He reached the landing, turned it and ran down the rickety stairs.

The crowd took courage and flocked to the landing. They looked below. They observed the Kid standing over the dim form of Harper. The Kid's hands were working nimbly.

Some one on the landing yelled an alarm:

"Robbery! He's robbin' the dead man!"

There was a muffled creak of leather as some gentleman drew a gun; but the Gila Kid had slipped into black shadows.

A THIN young man in store clothes and broad-brimmed hat, one Charlie Green, *alias* the Gila Kid, made his way through the streets of San Francisco and finally entered a squalid domicile on Brannan Street where a worn, tired woman was eking out a living by washing.

Mr. Green, somewhat embarrassed, announced the death of Mr. John Harper. He formally tendered the widow a legacy of some two thousand dollars in gold. Mr. Harper had been a trifle lucky at roulette before his untimely death.

Mrs. Harper was slow to believe the news and slower to believe the gold. Mr. Harper had been somewhat neglectful of her. She looked at the Kid, looked at the money and looked at the Kid again, while her youngster played on the top of a near-by flour-barrel.

"You say he's dead?" inquired Mrs. Harper dazedly.

"Yes, ma'am. He fell off a porch."

"And—and died instantly?"

"Pretty near; yes, ma'am. You might say he was dead before he touched the ground."

The woman still seemed dazed. Her bony hands patted her forehead reflectively.

"How did you know where I lived?"

"He left a note-book with the address."

She couldn't believe it yet!

"It must have been a terrible trip for you, comin' all this way!" she remarked, absently trying to be polite.

"Yes, ma'am; but I was his pardner. The way it all happened, I *was forced to do it!*"

Which, considering the Kid's viewpoint, was utter truth.

RIVALS of the REEF

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Nemesis," "Smoke Island," etc.

HIKUERU was *en fête*. It was July and the Resident, from his seat on Fakarava—the atoll of the fifteen islets—had declared Hikueru officially open in its rotational turn among the seventy-eight atolls of the Low Archipelago. For seven years the oysters, bedded in the rocky and surf waters between the barrier and the fringing reefs, had been permitted to breed in peace and replenish their treasure-houses lined with shell and sometimes holding gems. Now the pearlers and the traders, the divers, with their families, and the amusement concessionaires had descended upon Hikueru and its population had increased—almost overnight—a score of times, from two hundred to nearly four thousand. A thousand of these were divers, some of them renowned throughout Polynesia for skill and some for luck, all fine, strong and muscular, a little darker of skin than their cousins of Tahiti, fourteen-fathom men to whom a stay of four minutes under water was part of the day's work, barrel-chested and lithe-limbed, earning big wages when the season was on, spending their money with the prodigality of children at a fair.

In the shallow, milky, inner lagoon rode the fleet of pearlers and the traders' less trim and dainty vessels—launches, whaleboats, sloops, yawls and schooners, with and without auxiliary engines, some with patched sails and blistered hulls, others as spick and span as racing yachts at Newport.

The lonely ring of sand with its coconut-palms and pandanus, its sparse breadfruit and bananas, the thatched, wicker-sided shacks of the regular population and the house of Jabez Bunker, retired whaler, once of Nantucket, with its dignity of wood and glass and corrugated iron; looked, indeed, as if a county fair had suddenly been set down in tropic setting. The concessionaires had set up their gaily painted gear, transported from year to year as the various atolls were opened; they had put up their stands and drove a roaring trade with the sons and daughters of the sun. The traders had erected tents and portable houses, a *muvi* showed its flickering films under canvas, the peace of the far-flung Paumotuan atoll, four hundred miles west of Tahiti, had turned to a pandemonium—to the fevered pursuit of profit combined with pleasure.

The divers—the day's work ended—attired in trousers of white duck, in silk shirts of vivid dyes, with yet more vivid bandanas about their necks, their supple feet naked to the sand, escorting their more elaborately toileted *fahines*, scattered their dollars as a farmer's boy scatters grain to hungry chickens. On silk dresses and stockings, on cheap but glittering jewelry, on side-combs studded with mock diamonds, on violently patterned dress-goods, on candy, scented soap and perfume. These for the *fahines*. For themselves or for mutual delectation, the succulent canned goods of the *popaa**—safety-razors, electric torches, striped shirts and gaudy hosiery, popcorn, waffles, hot-dog sandwiches, rainbow-colored soda-pop—stronger liquors—on cure-alls and fancy canes, on harmonicas and toy balloons.

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*White man.

They gambled on lottery wheels for kewpie dolls, lamps and patent coffee pots, they threw rings for knives and cheap watches, they rolled balls for crockery and hardware. They rode on the merry-go-round and tilted for brass rings, they danced to wheezing calliope organs, adapting their own hulas to out-of-date foxtrots, they swooped, shrieking, on the roller-coaster or spurted madly along the beach in rattly motor-cars packed with yelling overloads.

This year there were two special attractions. Electric lights had supplanted the flaring torches and strings of colored lamps were strung between the palms while arcs sputtered over the main attractions. Greatest wonder of wonders, a radio gave programs broad-casted from Papeete, the Paris of Polynesia, central pearl mart of the South Seas.

The pearlers gathered in one another's cabins or visited ashore with the traders, shrewd men with eager eyes; Frenchman, Yankee, Jew, Portuguese, Australian, Chinese, with half-breeds of many combinations; keen to cull fortune from the reef waters, jealous of each other's luck. Independent buyers ready to bid for pearls brought up by celebrated divers who refused to work for hire, ready to buy secretly gems that might be brought to them privily, to drive close bargains in return for asking no questions as to ownership.

The lights were reflected in the water. The raucous calliopes, the singing, shouting natives deadened the drum-roll of the surf, while barkers hoarsely proclaimed in unrefined Beach-English the superiority of their attractions. Liquor flowed, men boasted and women flirted with eyes like gazelles, languorous and alluring. The day's best pearl was passed from hand to hand, shimmering on horny palms, appraised and put away against the time it would adorn the milk-white, satin-smooth throat of a millionaire's woman or gleam in the tiara of a princess.

Over all the palms waved plumes of velvety black where the parrakeets dozed uneasily, the tide flowed in the lagoons and flung spray high above the reef, faintly gleaming with green and blue jewels of liquid fire. The tropic starlight shifted down and the trade blew sweet and steady, south by east, from a thousand leagues of deep, untrammeled sea.

THERE were a dozen men in the house of Jabez Bunker, enjoying the blend of golden rum and the liquor of young coconuts dispensed by their genial host. Only once in seven years did Jabez have the chance he craved of a bona fide audience and he provided generously for the occasion. He was a man full of speech that demanded listeners and his guests put up with his garrulity for the sake of good-fellowship and good alcohol. Nearly all of them were acquaintances if not actually friends, Bunker's talk did not lack flashes of wit that was apt to be pointed with local and personal significance. And the rum was particularly mellow.

"I presume likely," said Jabez, ruffling the fringe of white whiskers beneath his chin with a wrinkled hand that once had flung a vigorous harpoon, "I presume likely that love is the meanest trick Natur' ever perpetrated on a human bein'. First place, it usually strikes ye afore you reach the age of reason, second place it don't take no more count of reason 'n a gallied whale. It's all a matter of the senses and even them goes back on you. The homeliest female looks fine, sounds fine, feels fine. She may be a hedge sparrer but she appears to yore pore, deluded mind like a bird o' paradise. A man ain't accountable when he's in love and he oughtn't to be held any more responsible for his actions than a man who's caught fever should be held liable for bein' delirious."

"Who you hittin' at now, you old Mormon?" said a pearler. "Fine call *you* got to preach about love an' wimmen."

"When you reach my age," returned Jabez, undisturbed, a twinkle in his faded blue eyes, "you l'arn somethin' about the wiles of the sex an' you choose 'em with discretion an' use 'em accordin' to their qualifications. I was talkin' of the blind passion of youth.

"Here's two likely young chaps, Tom Macy and Jim Kitchell, plumb crazy over thet gal of Jean Lupin's. She's a good-looker an' a high-stepper, even to my failin' jedgment, but she thinks a dern sight more of Lisette Lupin's little finger—an' maybe a fine ring to show it off—than she does of the hull bodies an' souls of the pair of 'em. They used to be friends an' now they got as much use for each other as a pair of strange tomcats on a moonlight night in June. Both of 'em hangin' about the merry-go-round most of yestiddy 'stead of bossin' their divin', for fear one of 'em might steal a march on t'other. She's makin' a merry-go-round out of each of 'em an' not carin' more for either of 'em than a toot on her old man's calliope."

"Meanin' she wouldn't marry either of 'em?"

"Meanin' that Lisette Lupin aims to marry a good time, silk gowns, lots of money, with a man thrown in for good measure. Neither of them boys is rich enough to satisfy her. Then there's Timoteo, best diver in the group, crazy because she's got no use for him, though they say she makes a pet dog out of him in the off season. Three good men, plumb wasted."

"Wonder she didn't make Timoteo give her the pearl he claims he found on Tia Rau."

"She ain't goin' to take a gift like that from a half-white. Give her credit, Lisette's no jade-hopper. But Timoteo's spell-set. Got a brown man's hide an' a white man's pride an' that's one —— of a combination to wrastle with. There's more coconuts jest outside the door, all husked and the hatchet handy. You might bring in a dozen or so, Gil," Jabez said to the man who had asked about the pearl.

"Where's Tia Rau?" a younger man asked a grizzled trader. "Never heard of it. It ain't one of the group, is it?"

"Will be when it's growed up. It's a spoutin' reef 'bout twenty mile west of Marutea, down Mangareva way. Ha'f born atoll, coral still livin', reef on'y out of water at low tide. One —— of a place to go pearlin'. I've passed it three or four times an' the water's bin alive with the biggest sharks I ever see. There's no anchorage—you'd have to pass a cable to the reef—an' all sorts of currents. Come on to blow, you'd have to cut an' run. Tia Rau ain't the only reef round there neither. It's all coral. Got to work yore way in by the color of the water or con from the spreaders an', with any kind of wind rufflin' the surface, yo're takin' too many chances of feedin' them sharks.

"Quite a trip from here. Timoteo might have made it in his canoe, like he claims, but you can't believe a word these half-whites tell you. Course he swims like a fish an' he don't mind a shark or two, but I heard him sayin' he wouldn't tackle Tia Rau again in a hurry. Swears the king of the sharks nigh gobbled him. Swears it slid over the reef to git at him. But then he's bin drunk ever since he sold the pearl. Ah Chung had claim on him for advance money an' give him two hundred cash to boot. He's chuckin' that away like it was crumbs in his pockets."

"Did you see the pearl?"

"I sure did. Not so terrible big, say five grains, maybe a carat and a ha'f, becos them black pearls are heavy; but perfect an' full of fire. The chink 'll get a thousand for it, easy."

"I never saw a black pearl in these waters."

"Ain't many. Sort of freak, I reckon This one 's got a skin like black satin. If it was paired it 'ud be worth ha'f as much again, but Timoteo ain't likely to find another one like it in his life-time. Listen to old Bunker clack, w'ud ye? Moralisin' old cuss—to hear him talk—but, if he ain't a Mormon he ought to be. Want to take a stroll down the 'street'? You're a New-come. I'll introduce ye to Lisette Lupin. She'll do the rest."

"Think I'm going to fall for her, like Macy and Kitchell? I'm out for just one thing, mister—money."

The grizzled trader chuckled.

"We'll see, son. Bunker ain't fur wrong. There ain't so many white wimmen hereabouts and Lisette is sure a beauty. If I was yore age——"

He swished the liquor in the bottom of his coconut, finished it, tossed the empty chalice out of the open door, filled his pipe and lighted it.

"But I ain't," he added with a sigh as he threw away the match. "Come on."

THE "street" was the straggling line of the Concessions, the *muvi* palace at one end and Jean Lupin's merry-go-round at the other, stretching half the narrow oval of the inner lagoon.

Down the street, tagged by a crowd of his friends, swaggered Timoteo Paraki—Timothy Black—son of a Tahitian mother and the mate of a Sydney barkentine—with a brown man's hide and a white man's pride—spending his money royally. His silken shirt of wide black and white stripes was open across his great chest where the smooth brown skin mocked the silk for texture. There was a silk handkerchief of violet and violent design on an orange ground loosely tied about his neck under wreaths of fragrant *awapuhi* blossoms. A scarf of orange through the belt-guides of his duck trousers emphasized the slimness of his waist compared with his broad shoulders.

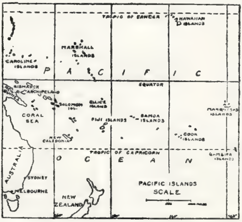
The eyes of many *fahines* rested on Timoteo with favor, his fathom of stature, his little, curly, unrazored mustache, even the "canoe" nose that his white father had bequeathed him. But they were not for him, even as he, human hybrid that he was, was not for Lisette, or any other white woman. Lisette, who treated him like a dog and whose dog he was glad to be, sensing the barrier set between them, not quite understanding it, sometimes resenting it but always recognizing it as impassable, irrevocable.

He was burdened with trophies of his prodigal process, clumsily laden with dolls, a lamp-shade, a beribboned box of stale candy, another of fancy soap, a bottle of perfume, a cushion with the word ALOHA sprawled across it in coarse embroidery, a blue pennant appliquéd with HIKUERU in yellow felt. Tuli, a native belle, herself a skilful diver, watched them wistfully, hoping that they were destined for her. Timoteo, warmly drunk, a trifle vacant of eye but still coördinate of limb and speech, intended them for Lisette—proofs of his prowess and his devotion.

The fearfully carven and wonderfully painted beasts of the merry-go-round began to lift and fall, to go round and round with increasing speed while the laughing riders, daringly balanced or clinging to the iron rods that suspended the mounts from the creaking apparatus overhead, called to each other, sang to the grunting hoots of the steam orchestrion.

Lisette's job was to collect the fares, to coax another round from reluctant swains whose funds were getting low, to smile up customers. Her father, sallow as tallow, for all the tropic sun, his imperial stained with tobacco juice, looking a good deal like a dissipated goat, stood leaning against the engine enclosure that hubbed the contrivance, running the orchestrion, bossing the sweating efforts of the *Kanaka* fireman. This was his harvest—the pearling season—the rest of the year he spent at Papeete, gambling with varying success and hoping for the time his handsome daughter would furnish him with a rich and generous son-in-law. Not much of a man—Jean Lupin.

Lisette stood talking to Tom Macy, tall and lean and blond, drifting across the land and sea in search of adventure and hope of fortune, son of the Massachusetts coast, with a love for the sea his rightful heritage. Just now Lisette had him in the web of her attractions—black eyes, softened a little by thick, long lashes, black hair that was lustrous and wavy, little white teeth that she was fond of showing between the full, petulant red lips, a trick of catching up the lower one that displayed a dimple in her cheek, a white throat and a curving, pliant figure that could make a man mad with longing—all the instincts and intuitions, all the tricks of sex lure with which Nature—or the devil—has invested passionate womanhood—these, and a gown that hinted where it did not reveal, these things made up Lisette.



She knew that he had flown, not entirely willingly, within her rayed entanglements, she looked upon him as a victim to her charms, but sometimes she was a little afraid of him. He had meant to be masterful and she held no idea of being mastered. Back of the beautiful, facile face was a Gallic brain, shrewd and calculating.

Macy talked to her in indifferent French, learned in the Argonne, and she laughed at him, using his inferiority as a weapon and a shield against him. Her eyes clung to his, never leaving his face, her attitude was both adoring and adorable. Macy's blood began to flame within him at her provocations and he saw in her glance that she knew it and was amused and gratified.

"You little ——," he said, catching her by the wrists and forcing her toward him, "you little ——, you're going to go too far some day."

Her chin dropped into the soft hollow at the bottom of her throat, her eyes opened wide and innocently, looking up at him.

"*M'sieu*, I do not understand. And you are to please let go my wrists. It hurts me. My father, people are looking."

"Let 'em look. And don't you call me *m'sieu*, call me Tom, and say it as if you liked it."

"Veree good, Mister Tom," she answered in English with a *moue* that set her lips for a kiss that could not be taken.

Timoteo, swaying slightly, approached, bearing his gifts. Lisette frowned at him.

"Go away," she cried. "You are drunk. You have spent all your money. You are a fool, Timoteo, and I am ashamed of you."

Utterly abashed, his emotional nature reacting childishly, the tears welled up in Timoteo's big eyes. His arms drooped and the gifts fell to the sand.

The orchestrion had stopped, the machinery was beginning to slow down. Jean Lupin stepped forward, his husky voice barking out his formula.

"Keep your seats, ladies and gentlemen! Ride once more on the animals enchanted! Remember, one free ride in three! A few saddles empty. Fifty centimes—three times around the world for a franc! Pay your money to the lady."

"Let the old gentleman run the machine," said Macy. "I want to talk to you. You never give me a chance."

"Perhaps it is because I am not sure of *m'sieu's* intentions," she countered, but she beckoned her father with an imperious nod. She was quite well aware of her value to him, both as attraction for his concession and possible dispenser of bounty after a successful marriage.

Lupin came out of the ring of prancing wooden steeds reluctantly. He would have to scramble back under them to start his orchestrion, that could not be trusted to the *Kanaka* fireman, and he loved his dignity—he was not without his little affairs.

Timoteo was clumsily picking up his spurned presents and bestowing them upon Tuli, a little piqued at being a second choice, but quite willing to accept them. He lurched into Lupin and the irascible Frenchman turned on him with a snarl.

"*Va-t-en, sacré Kanaque!*" he cried as he supplemented the invective with a kick that sent Timoteo on all fours.

The half-white was up like a cat, his eyes flashing. To be called a cursed *Kanaka* was an insult hardly to be borne, to be kicked into the bargain——!

Lupin retreated, gazing anxiously for one of the two *gendarmes*, his hand straying to his hip pocket. Lisette and Macy had disappeared. But Timoteo restrained himself. He could not strike the father of Lisette. Sorrow for himself and his rejected offerings again took first place in his cloudy brain and he moved off, with Tuli trailing him, triumphantly hanging on to the dolls, the lamp-shade, the boxes of perfume, soap and candy, the cushion and the pennant.

Lisette and Macy, passing through irregular rows of coco-palms, emerged upon the smooth, hard sand of the inner lagoon. The noise of the street seemed suddenly very far away, an effect more of contrast than distance. The stars burned with such a clear radiance that the scene might have been one viewed by daylight through purple glass. The lagoon lay like a mirror, reflecting the golden points above. The tide was at full and lapped gently at their feet as they strolled down to the edge of the water, looking off at the fleet, moored in a tangle of masts and shrouds and stays, hulls picked out by the glows from porthole and skylight. A wharf ran out close by to which a hundred shoreboats were moored. Across the lagoon the plumes of palms brushed the dark sky softly, doubled in the limpid pool. Beach-vines with pale-pink lily blossoms, rarely fragrant, twined over the sand. They were as utterly alone as if they had moved behind the back curtain of a theater while the farce was going forward.

"Will you come off to the schooner?" he asked her.

She shook her head.

"Certainly not."

"When am I going to be alone with you?"

"No man is going to be alone with me, for long—save my father—unless he is my husband, *m'sieu*."

She curtained her eyes with her long lashes. He did not know whether she was mocking him. The allure of her, the subtle combination of rounded body, skin white as frangipani blooms and as soft, the challenge of her voice, a faint, intoxicating perfume that seemed to emanate from her, maddened him.

"Will you marry me?"

He had not willed to say that, he told himself, but it was said. She showed him her eyes then liquid, with starlight in them. If the curve of her mouth was a little triumphant he did not see it.

"I do not know," she said softly.

"What do you mean?"

"See then, Tom."

The "Tom" thrilled him and he tried to gather her up in his arms but she eluded him. Her voice was cool—water on the glow of his ardor.

"You, like my father, work only in the pearling season. He has his machine and you your yawl. But there are many pearlers and, unless one is very lucky, the money is all gone before the season comes again. And I have seen too much of that with my father. If the market is dull even luck may not bring you much good. When I marry I want a home, a garden, some one to do the work so that I may remain the lover of my husband—not his housekeeper. And, that I may hold his love, there must be money for dainty things——"

"What do I care what you wear," Macy said hoarsely. "I will get you the moon, if you want it."

"Yes—but how, my friend? Listen. You have seen the pearl of Timoteo? You know where he found it?"

"I know where he says he found it. In the ring of the reef at Tia Rau, a place where the coral is thick as the teeth in a comb and a shark to every fathom."

"He found it there. Timoteo would not lie to me. I have known him ever since I could walk. He wanted to give me the pearl."

"And you didn't take it?"

Macy's voice, for all his passion for the girl, was slightly incredulous.

"Why should I take a gift from any man? Am I a breed, like Timoteo?"

He winced before the sudden scorn in her voice and blazing eyes. It held as she went on.

"Timoteo will not go back to Tia Rau. He is afraid of the sharks. Of course, if you are afraid?"

"I am not afraid."

"It is a virgin reef. There is a fortune there for any one brave enough to take it."

"I'll go tonight."

He caught her up, kissed her fairly but she did not return the caress though she did not struggle.

"You do not love me," he said.

"I will give you my kisses when you bring back the pearls," she answered.

Macy did not heed the mercenary nature of the proviso. He could still feel the soft warmth of her in his arms as he left her again at the merry-go-round and went in search of Timoteo. He had two divers but neither was more than ordinarily good. What had frightened Timoteo might well frighten them. He would gut the lagoon if he had to go down himself, he resolved. But he wanted to assure himself that Timoteo had given up the reef, relinquished his claim, to make certain that he had really gone to Tia Rau. He might have lied to the girl, but Macy flattered himself that he knew natives, and Timoteo was mostly that. His white heritage had dwindled because of his living with the brown.

He was friendly with the half-breed, had given him liquor and tobacco, loaned him small sums, hoping some day that Timoteo might dive for him.

He found him in a grog shanty, spending the last of his money, boastful, unsteady on his feet, inclined to be surly as the crude traders' gin inflamed his brain. Macy flattered him, offered to buy a round, bought a bottle and gave it to his "friend."

"You all right," said Timoteo. "You proper kind of white man, Masi. What name you want to go along that —— Tia Rau? That place no good. Too many shark along that place. King shark along there. By ——, suppose I no can swim better than a shark, that fella catch me that time. Too much reef, too *lele* water. Plenty trouble along that place."

There was no chance of persuading the diver to go with him. He still had money, he said, displaying a hundred-franc note, already marked by the shanty owner for his own. He withdrew any claim of first discovery though that did not really exist, save in unwritten law, but he so graphically described the place and his adventure with the shark that Macy was convinced.

"My word, Masi, better you not go," Timoteo pleaded. "You too good fella to feed that shark."

Macy extracted a promise from him to say nothing of his trip, doubtful of the value of the pledge, rounding up his divers and the two natives who made up his crew, and rowing them off to his boat the *Seamew*.

Half an hour later the yawl slipped her moorings and quietly slid out of the inner lagoon and so through the gate of the reef on the ebb. He had no engine. He was not overlucky and, what he made, he spent easily on other things, but the yawl had good lines, and there was a fair wind along the reef that strengthened as he worked out to sea.

Tia Rau lay southeast and the trade blew from the same direction. On the chart it pricked off at two hundred and twenty miles between the points but the yawl was none too fast close-hauled and he figured on three hundred at least, a long leg east-southeast and a short one southwest. The wind should hold—if he had luck. Call it three days, less than that back. Ten days should see him at Hikueru again, driving bargains with the buyers or holding the best gems for the Papeete market.

Lisette would not withhold her kisses then.

He had food enough aboard, water in his tanks and a supply of young coconuts. He had not advertised his going if Timoteo kept his mouth shut. Probably he would get so drunk that he would sleep it off for a day and forget everything except his aching head, his empty pockets, and thirst for more gin.

It was just as well he had slipped away. Some one else might get the same idea though most of them believed in the pearl in hand rather than in an untried lagoon. Hikueru would hold them unless some one, a smart one like Lisette, put them up to it. And there was only one Lisette, a bit keen after the coin, as French girls were apt to be, but that was the kind who made the best wives after all. What a beauty she was!

JIM KITCHELL, Anzac, was of more solid stuff than Macy, less volatile but no less persistent. It was not so much the beckoning finger of Dame Adventure that kept him in the Tropic of Capricorn as the determination to achieve his ultimate ambition, the ownership of a copra plantation with a reef encircling several islets, two thousand acres of land on which he could plant a hundred thousand palms and nurture them. At four tons of copra annually for each five hundred trees—with copra at seventy-five dollars a ton, he would be paying taxes on a worthwhile income. It took capital to start and more to swing the overhead during the seven years required for the palms to come to maturity, but his mind was steadfast to that end.

He had come to the South Seas as manager for the atoll plantation of a Sydney trading-house, with an ocean branch at Suva. When the bags of copra were lightered aboard the company's schooner and Kitchell took his three months' vacation, he saved his handsome pay check instead of "blowing" the nine months solid earnings, with his mind upon a short cut to his ambitions by the "submarine" route—pearl-shell and pearls.

His schooner *Marama* was well-found, with an auxiliary engine, and he never had to borrow at ruinous interest wages for his crew or money to carry him through the off-season. Then he traded on his own account for turtle-shell, trepang, the edible nests of sea-swifts, and sharks' fins. He was slowly getting ahead. The war—and his share in it—had set him back, but he was nearing the mark he had set; five years more of average luck would see him through.

He was a big man, bigger than Macy but not so wiry, with blue eyes, a skin tanned deep buff except where the loin-kilt he wore preserved the original ivory. Slow at a jest but good-humored. The bachelor type, until Lisette had swept him off her feet, setting her cap for the easy-going, well thought of Australian, whose name had never been coupled with that of a girl, at whom the native women covertly jested, as one who had cold water in his veins.

Now he was hit hard and he took it moodily. A wife had not entered particularly into his calculations so far. Some nice girl, some day, to be chosen in Sydney when he had made his pile. But a man cannot live the life of a hermit and be immune to the lure of beauty when white girls are as scarce as white blackbirds. He was wax in Lisette's hands and he had practically lost a steadily growing friendship with Macy, whom he had known overseas. There had been no quarrel, but the rivalry was sufficient and he felt himself no match for the quick-witted American.

He sat in the big tent, sultry despite the up-rolled sides, packed with men and women enjoying the *muvis*, well-worn films indifferently projected; paying scant attention to the sugary story with its fade-out happy ending. The film lovers made him think of Lisette and Macy. He had seen them stroll off together and he tortured himself by a mental scenario of his own, sweating in the overcrowded place, his ducks limp, chewing a cold cigar, wishing he had not come to Hikueru but gone off to the Gambiers, as he had first intended.

A slap-bang farce, with a squint-eyed hero, irritated him, though the tent shook with laughter and he left, meaning to go off to his schooner, read a bit, smoke, take a solitary nightcap and turn in. A man was a fool to let a woman possess him that way, he told himself. He'd break it off—and knew himself a fool for thinking that he could. Lisette's piquant face was between him and the screen; Lisette, with her cunning ways and her quaint accent. He could not talk French as Macy could, he knew only a few limping, ill-pronounced phrases that Lisette laughed at, calling him "her beeg, foolish Australian."

He got up and groped his way out to the cooler night and let the magnet of mating take him down the street toward the Lupin concession. If Macy was with her, or if they were still away, he would go aboard.

Midway, Timoteo lurched into him. The diver's eyes were bloodshot as if he had been diving too deep and too long. His flower wreaths were wilted and dragging, his mouth was loosely open.

"What name you do that?" he challenged Kitchell, not recognizing him, though they knew each other well enough. Every one on Hikueru, following the pearling industry, were at least acquaintances if not friends. "You think because you white man I am a —— *Kanaka?*"

"Not a bit of it, my son," said Kitchell, putting his big hand on the half-white's shoulder. "You know better than that. You've got a bit too much aboard. Better go and sleep it off. Go off to my schooner if you like—the *Marama*—you know it."

Timoteo looked at him with a vacant stare, muttering the word that his flaccid attention had gripped, moving off as a native girl took his arm.

"*Marama*—his—*Marama! M'rama* means moon, big fella white man. Moon means moonshine. Le's go get some moonshine."

He lapsed into native, protesting at the girl's efforts to drag him to a dance platform.

It was getting late, the fun dying down. He rather hoped the diver would have sense enough to go off to the schooner. If he stayed ashore he would be fit for nothing, unable to dive and he was undoubtedly broke. But that was a good pearl he had sold to Ah Chung. A deuce of a place to get it, though. Tia Rau. He knew the new atoll that the coral insects had built up to be presently seeded by floating coconuts, by birds and, later, by men. It might be worth tackling. By Jove, that was not a bad idea. He knew the spot. There was one channel through the shallows leading close to it. Rotten anchorage, rotten place if it came on to blow. Still——

Turning over the idea without definite purpose, he came to the end of the street. The merry-go-round was getting loaded for its last trip, loudly proclaimed by Lupin. Lisette was there, taking the fares. No sign of Macy.

"Where 'ave you been, Mister Kitchell?" she asked him and the big man's heart pounded as she went on—

"Me, I 'ave expect you all evening an' you do not come."

"I saw you going off with Macy," he said. "Didn't want to play gooseberry, y' know," he added with an attempt at lightness.

"Gooseberry? I do not know what you mean by gooseberry, you silly, beeg man. Macy, he is gone," she said with a suddenly keen glance, her dark eyes hard as jet, though they were jewels to Kitchell. "So you shall take me home."

Lupin and his daughter, coming to the atoll in the big Concessions schooner, boarded at a shack, half-wood and half-canvas, set up by an old blackbirder and his native wife, who made a business of catering to the concessionaires. It was placed on the other side of the atoll, away from the noise and Kitchell welcomed the chance, waiting while Lupin put the night's takings in a canvas bag, lighted a cheroot, inspected his motive power, locked up and accompanied them, turning off at Bunker's house where the old whaler, half-seas over, was entertaining his company with a roaring song.

Lisette put her hand on his big arm, confidingly, saying nothing until they were well away from the crowd. Then she sighed.

"It is nothing, beeg man," she answered his query. "Onlee, sometime I am tire of all this. Me, I like to have the little house and maybe the *jardin*, also to cook—do not laugh at me—I can cook verree well, if I have some one I like to cook for. I am what you call verree domesticate, beeg man. You would nevaire think that of me—Lisette—no?"

She looked so adorable in the starlight, clinging to his arm, that Kitchell trembled and the girl tightened her fingers on his arm to feel him thrill. He was slow, this Australian, she thought impatiently. The American boy would have not been so stupid. But she could move him—even as she could move Macy, speeding now to buy her kisses and a wedding ring. But she was not afraid of this one as she was of Macy. Macy demanded, this one begged, was even afraid to ask for what he should attempt to take. She had her own thrill of conquest. These two had been friends—now they were rivals. For her sake they might be made to even fight each other. It would be a terrible fight. She wondered which would win?

Macy would spend his money. She would have to struggle to put aside, to get her share, which should be the bigger one. Kitchell would be careful but he would not deny her anything. Which did she want? Kitchell had the better vessel, cash in the bank at Papeete. If Macy got the pearls—*If Kitchell got them?*

"You are still fren'ly with M'sieur Macy?" she asked.

"I hope so."

Stupid! That was not the answer. Had the man no jealousy?

"You mus' not let heem get ahead of you," she said aloud.

"What do you mean?"

"M'sieu Macy, he ha' gone to Tia Rau."

"What?"

"He has gone to get those pearls that Timoteo left because of the beeg shark that make him afraid. You, beeg man, you are not afraid of shark, are you?"

"How long ago did he start?"

"Maybe he hav' not start yet."

She reflected, shipwise, that the schooner would sail faster than the yawl, that if there were calms the *Marama's* engine would leave the other too hopelessly out of the race. There might be a fight when the yawl finally arrived. She would not be able to see that. But she would know that the two were mutually challenged for her favor.

"He is in a great hurree to get reech, he tell me," she said.

"What for?"

She had struck a spark there. The affair began to march. She was like a doe that listens to the stag's bugling while she stands quivering with the delightful tremor of the coming combat.

"How should I know? He did not tell me," she lied. "But, if he is reech, he can get many things that he wants. Maybe he wants to marree. All men do that when they are reech? Would not you, Jeem?"

It was the first time she had ever used his first name but he barely noticed it. He knew what Macy was after. And the girl knew, of course. What was it she had said? "You must not let him get ahead of you?" By George, that meant that she preferred him, after all! And——

"Or perhaps you do not care to marree, you hav' nevaire been in love, Jeem?"

He stopped her abruptly.

"Look here, Lisette," he said. "I had a notion tonight to go to Tia Rau myself. I'm going. I'm going to beat Macy to it. He's not going to get ahead of me. You said not to let him. What did you mean by that?"

He was aroused at last with his crisp, direct questions, demanding answer. She looked around swiftly, there was no one in sight. Then she gave him a shy glance.

"You are so verree, verree stupid sometimes, big Jeem," she said.

He had her in his arms then, talking foolishly, calling himself a big lout, too clumsy for her daintiness but, by ——, he'd be good to her! She struggled a little, rumpled, upset by the force of his emotions, resigning herself to his awkward caresses at last as his superior strength conquered her, and, curiously, calmed her.

"Then go, Jeem," she said at last. The fool had not tried to kiss her.

"I'll see you home first," he told her.

And he did not speak again until they had reached the shack and halted in the deep shadow of a spreading tamarind. But she sensed the seething tempest within him and accepted it as a compliment. She lifted her face up to him.

"Goodnight, Jeem," she said. "You may kees me, if you wish, for the good luck."

And gave him what she had denied Macy, her lips in response. That fired him. She felt his great arms quiver about her before he released her. Her lips were bruised, but she did not complain to herself even after he had left her, swearing to bring back the pearls.

She felt certain that he would, and just as confident of Macy. It was a dramatic situation and she, Lisette, had brought it about. She was the heroine. She could not lose whichever of the two won. And she could not decide which she wished to win. He who did would prove the better man. She hugged herself with her smooth, white round arms as she snugged into bed.

Hikueru, the Paumotus, Papeete, Tahiti—all would buzz with the news of how two men went forth at the bidding of Lisette Lupin, facing the hazards of the reef, the jealousy of each other to win her a fortune and—for one of them—the grand prize of her hand.

Kitchell walked back in a maze. He had never tried to prevision the girl he might ultimately marry, but he was sure that, if he had, she would not have been like Lisette. Some serene-eyed, sport-loving affectionate Sydney maid, not one of a hundred moods whose word and act and look made him suddenly palpitate as if excited by violent exertion. The force of his passion, long held in check, frightened him. Macy, trying to steal a march on him, was to be removed as ruthlessly as ever primitive man went out, stone mace in hand, to dispose of a rival.

Reason was eliminated, one set purpose, born of the emotions, reigned instead.

He was short of gasoline. He had expected to replenish before leaving at Jabez Bunker's, the sale of petrol and oil being one of the whaler's main sources of income and an acknowledged monoply. But, at Bunker's, a roomful was now joining in the chorus of the chanty. To get gas meant publicity and there was no sense in having the whole atoll know that he had gone to Tia Rau. They might laugh at him, and they might not. He had the reputation of being hardheaded in business and he knew it.

What he did not know was that Bunker had apostrophised both him and Macy as love-mad. But they would not be likely to connect Lisette with either his absence or Macy's. They might take a notion that he had some definite inside information about the new reef and try to beat him out. It took little sometimes to start a race of the whole pearling fleet to a new lagoon where finds had been reported, especially if that lagoon was not yet under any governmental authority. The first to land was ordinarily the winner, unless he left for some reason before the beds were stripped—or was forcibly or trickily dislodged. No stampede to a new gold-bearing creek ever got under way with greater rapidity and excitement than the occasional rushes of the pearlers.

He had enough margin of speed over Macy to beat him out easily, even with the three or four hours' handicap the other had in his favor. Sufficient gas to maneuver without trouble in the one navigable channel that approached the new atoll, to get him out of a tight place in case of sudden dirty weather.

It was no use trying to see Timoteo, he concluded. His own divers were good men. He had to get hold of them before they wandered off to native quarters for the night.

The colored strings of electrics winked out. Then the sputtering arcs—with the exception of three that would burn until an hour later. The fair closed promptly at midnight, by order of the Resident, represented by the two gendarmes who kept the peace on Hikueru while the fleet was present.

Kitchell hurried on toward the street, looking for his men. Men and women, practically all natives, drifted along the street, loath to leave, all more or less excited, a good many more or less drunk. Suddenly a mob formed, the groups flocking to a common center as filings go to the magnet. There were high, angry words, a woman's shrill scream, one *gendarme* forcing his way into the crowd, the other running up the street, the scabbard of his little sword slapping against his thigh, his cocked hat gleaming under an arc.

Here was the best of places to corral his men. Kitchell pushed his weighty bulk through to where Timoteo stood gesticulating, astride of a bearded white man in white ducks and white shirt. It was a trader named Harris, a good deal of a bully. Now his face was waxen and the breast of his shirt was red with blood under the light that pended almost directly overhead. There was blood also on the knife in Timoteo's right hand.

"He call me a —— *Kanaka!*" Timoteo was shouting. "Too many people tonight call me that name!"

His words were clear, the tragedy seemed to have momentarily sobered him. The first *gendarme* touched him on the arm, the second arrived pantingly and caught the other wrist. Timoteo had lowered his knife hand at the first touch of arrest and allowed the uniformed official, representing the might and majesty of the law, to take the stained weapon. For a moment he stood between them unresisting, gripped on either side with his elbows pinioned.

One of the officers called on a native to help hold the prisoner while he knelt down beside Harris and opened the sopping shirt.

"If you've killed him, this means *l'Ile Nu* for you," said the officer.

The island of Nu—off Noumea in New Caledonia, site of the first French penal settlement in the South Seas! A name of dread and terror, more so to a free and independent rover like Timoteo than to most. Timoteo, wont to come and go where he pleased, free of the land and sea and the waters under the sea. For a pulsebeat his eyes widened, his lips curled back like the lips of a spent runner and then, supple as an eel, he wrenched loose.

The native, doubtless with sympathy, made but a palsied effort to regain his grip. The *gendarme* drew his sword but Timoteo caught the lunging arm, plucked loose the blade as he viced the officer's wrist, grinding the small bones cruelly. Then, flourishing the weapon, he turned and charged through the crowd like a rabid dog charging a flock of sheep. Kitchell seemed to be the only other white man present and he was on the opposite side from where the diver broke through the ring and vanished in the darkness between two concession stands, darting through the screen of coco-palms, lost utterly by the time the disarmed *gendarme*, the crowd hard on his heels, reached the beach.

The tide was half-out, but the firms and showed no footprints, there was no telltale ripple on the water, no form cleaving the surface. Or, if there were prints on the sand, the crowd swiftly annihilated them and Kitchell knew how Timoteo could take the water cleanly as a knife-blade, swimming under water for three—four minutes—even five, in such a catastrophe as that in which he was now involved. As between a *gendarme* and one of their own, half-white though he might be, there was little native love lost in the official direction, their accord was with Timoteo. As for the stricken white man he had struck Timoteo and sworn at him. Timoteo had struck back. He was the hero of a melodrama.

Kitchell found two of his own men and they gave him their account of what had happened as all three went back to the street. The *gendarme* had recovered his weapon from between the shacks. A litter had been brought and Harris placed in it. Several whites had come up from Bunker's place, among them a skipper, whose surgical experience was considerable, and who was the undiploma'd physician to the fleet.

"Kill him, doc?" asked a late-comer.

"Kill a crab with a toothpick! Knife hit the breast-bone, right on the mesosternum," said the skipper medico, glad to air knowledge. "Skidded off the ensiform cartilage. Harris lost half a pint of blood, which wouldn't hurt him any, and got knocked down by the force of the blow. Bumped his head and lost consciousness. All he wants is iodine and adhesive. If he wasn't drunk into the bargain he could walk. He's lucky and so's the man who stabbed him. Who was it?"

"Timoteo," said several. "He's got away."

Kitchell spotted another of his men. He was glad that Timoteo had not murdered Harris, as much on the diver's account as that of the trader, who was not popular, but his main interest was in his own affairs. He was unwilling to sail undermanned and it took half an hour before he finally got aboard the *Marama*, and, without starting his engine, half-drifted, half-sailed out of the lagoon on the tide, finding more wind in the outer lagoon, passing through the reef-gate with a capful breeze that took him into the full strength of the trade. He set jib, fore staysail, foresail and main, well sheeted inboard; eating into the wind, closer by three points than the yawl could sail, sliding off gradually to leeward but holding up well on his southeast course.

It was a full hour before any one went below. Kitchell kept the doors of his companion-hood locked when he was ashore, with the cabin bolted on the inside where ways led forward. But the forecastle companion was seldom closed, left open for better ventilation. It was the stowage of the cable that disclosed Timoteo, coiled up in the forepeak, his senses drowned in alcoholic fumes, dead to the world, limp and practically insensible when shaken. With the suggestion of Kitchell's reacting to his fear of conviction and transportation to *l'Ile Nu*, he had thought of the *Marama* and sought safety there, reaching her underwater, clambering aboard with a desperate agility that only deserted him when he slumped in the bows below decks.

There was no sense in taking him back. There was a good deal of sense in letting him stay, indebted to Kitchell. Once at Tia Rau, Timoteo, out of gratitude, might be induced to dive. It was a different matter pearling in that perilous tideway from a canoe and from a power-schooner.

Kitchell easily figured out Macy's probable course, knowing the capacities and incapacities of the yawl. He hardly expected to sight the *Seamew* until after he was established at Tia Rau. On the other hand, it would not have surprized him to glimpse the yawl, hull down, far to leeward.

Once landed on the reef, he did not have much fear of holding possession. It might be hard technically to maintain or prove continuous possession of an atoll at wash at high tide. "Landing" would have to be considered accomplished by the fluking of his anchor in the coral with constant connection preserved by its cable. If the matter ever became a question of jurisdiction. The Paumotu Group belonged to France, including the Mangareva or Gambier Group at the southeastern end of the archipelago. Southeast again of the Gambiers, geographically a part of the same archipelago, lay Pitcairn Ducie, Oeno and Elisabeth, or Henderson Island, owned by Great Britain. With the position of Tia Rau, east of the Gambiers, northeast of the British territory, either power might claim it with plausibility and probably would, if the atoll became important for any reason.

Any dispute would have to be fought out personally. Macy thought he was going to win a fortune and the girl, knowing nothing of Kitchell's active rivalry, never considering Kitchell as a serious competitor in love, knowing nothing of his activity concerning the pearls. Kitchell esteemed himself the accepted lover but, so far as Tia Rau was concerned, he and Macy were rivals of the reef. In former days they would have been likely to join forces and divide profits on such a deal, before Lisette had come between them and coolness arisen.

Kitchell assured himself that he would hold his own, once he reached the atoll. With force if necessary—if Macy tried any funny business. If he let Macy beat him out Lisette would lose her faith in him—he might even lose her love—for Macy to retrieve. Even now he was a little bothered at finding himself the favored man of the two. Macy must have said or done something to offend her, he fancied, perhaps taken her too lightly. Certainly he had been ahead in the running to all appearances. But Kitchell was not the sort to offer gratuitous insults.

He dismissed those musings with the final reflection that Lisette might well consider him the steadier man of the two, more likely to be constant than Macy. The measure of his own conceit welled up, remembering the kiss voluntarily given him.

When his native quartermaster relieved him at the wheel, Kitchell overhauled, oiled and loaded his little armory; the five rifles in the cabin rack, his pistols.

"You mus' not let heem get ahead of you, beeg Jeem!"

That slogan sounded as he turned in.

"I won't," he said to her image, to himself and to his pillow, just before he fell asleep.

THE yawl sailed merrily through the night over crisp seas that flung drops of blue liquid fire over the weather-rail, to roll down the tight curve of the mainsail, while the wake was a twisting whorl of phosphorescence. Macy handled the wheel, unmindful of sleep, rejoicing in the quickening weather. The *Seamew* was stoutly built though rig and hull design usually left her far behind in the race that invariably attended any expedition of the pearling fleet. But, give her half a gale, and she would bucket through with the best of them; make it a gale and the yawl, under jib and jigger, would stick her nose into it and shack along while the seas pounded her bows as they slumped into the trough, crabbing off a good deal but forging ahead, nevertheless, when others turned stern to the wind or stayed in harbor.

She was foul right now. Macy was inevitably hard up when the season opened, scratching for supplies and usually for wages, banking on his shell to carry him through. So that he had delayed cleaning and painting. But he had no suspicion of any one else being bound for Tia Rau, not even when, in the late afternoon, tacking sooner than he had anticipated because of strengthening wind and pronounced leeway, he saw the sails of a schooner silhouetted against the western sky, well to windward of him and well ahead, close-hauled, gripping close to the wind's eye, sailing like a witch. It was hull down, there was nothing noticeable about the cut of its sails to Macy and he dismissed it with the quite natural supposition that it was bound for Pitcairn, probably the trading schooner belonging to the Pitcairn Islanders returning from a regular trading trip to Mangareva.

The schooner sailed on into the mists of evening, lost in the dusk before Macy tacked again and followed it.

Kitchell had seen the yawl and chuckled at his long lead. The look of the sunset, the actions of both aneroid and mercurial barometers, pointed to a weather change, that might be calm, leading up to storm. It was just as well to be ahead and able to save gasoline.

At midnight he woke up itching with prickly heat, breathing heavily, and took another look at his barometers by the light of an electric flash. The pointer of the aneroid was tremulous and uncertain, the mercury was pumping like the liquid in the water-gage of a boiler as steam mounts. He went on deck to find the air little better than it was below. It was still in motion and the schooner had better than steering way but it was heavy, muggy, hard to breathe. Every little while it ceased entirely with a slap of the canvas. The stars were faint points of light, the air dulled with haze only discernible by the dimming of the constellations. Overside, the seas ran sluggishly without hissing, lacking aeration, filmy in patches with seafire.

The barometer register was twenty-nine eighty—low but not alarmingly so. Sweat kept breaking out of him, puddling, running down his body, naked save for a kilt. It was labor to breathe and the lungs were dissatisfied with a normal breath that left them with the feeling of having inhaled smoke. He took over the wheel and the entire crew grouped amidships, barely seen from where he stood, but slumped in a physical and mental inertia, gasping like so many landed fish. Kitchell was fairly seawise—he had had considerably more experience than Macy on account of his regular off-season cruisings—but he did not know what to expect.

An equinoctial gale might be expected any time, even this far south of the Line; too far south for monsoon winds, even had this been the season. He knew the South Pacific for a capricious ocean, its vagaries no more to be fixed or accounted for than the flow of the great currents, the turmoil of the small ones. Submarine peaks and gorges, the in and out flows of hundreds of atoll reefs caused medleys of streams and eddies that vexed the mariner without an engine; and the whims of the wind, the changes of temperature, were no less variable.

Night shifted into day almost imperceptibly. There was no graying of the east, no sudden burst of sun. When the latter appeared it looked like a tarnished brass boss in a concave bowl of dun-colored metal. The waves crawled, lacking all liveliness, crestless, the color of dishwater.

Sea and sky presented a melancholy prospect, inexpressibly gloomy and depressing. As the day wore on and the tawny disc of the sun crept up the lowering vault of the heavens, the barometer continued to fall and the air no longer stirred. The waves became more and more sluggish, the color of dishwater, greasy, heavy, so that the schooner seemed to plow through them with effort. The smell of oil and exploded gas about the decks, below; it was hardly bearable and Kitchell's first assistant engineer, a *Kanaka* rejoicing in the name of "Mangareva" Mattiu, keeled over. That put the job up to Kitchell and he made the best of it with regular visitations for oiling and inspection but it took away what little appetite he had and gave him a blinding headache.

To twenty-nine twenty—to the even numeral, below—slowly, steadily falling—falling; the barometers announced trouble ahead. He had sea-room enough for the present and he resolved to keep on. By himself he would have prudently turned west, run in to Maratea or Maria. But he was taking no chances of losing out to Macy. The latter was likely pitching helpless in this calm, tortoise to Kitchell's hare, yet the tortoise might win.

By now, though the image of Lisette was by no means less vivid when he recalled it, the race had largely resolved itself into a question of supremacy between Macy and himself, based on jealousy and sex, but sex was now largely submerged first by the excitement of the race and then in the tremendous enervation occasioned by the torrid atmosphere. To get the best of Macy—not to let Macy get the best of him. That kept him going and the screw turning over, burning precious gasoline. Even now the yawl might have a slant of wind outside the zone of calm. Conditions were often purely local. Before he had installed his engine Kitchell had often drifted for hours—sometimes days—within sight of his destination, held away by offshore currents, drifting like a chip in oil while, within a radius of five miles, a squall might be churning up the surface.

For all he knew Macy might have recognized him. He could take no chance—that way. And he kept on, ignoring weather signs. All the heave and toss went out of the sea; gradually it ceased to pulsate while the heat grew more intense until the conditions of breathing approached those of inhaling steam with the head over a bowl of boiling water, under a towel.

Tobacco had no taste, food was nauseating. The smell of the gas and oil hung round the schooner like a constantly thickening veil. An unnatural stillness seemed to be brooding in which the noises of the engine were apparently as loud as those of a stamp mill and every creak and protest of timber or block was tremendously magnified. The sea smelled stale. Kitchell worked out his dead reckoning at noon, by course and log, counter current and estimated leeway, and figured that he was within twenty miles of Tia Rau. His engine gave him a little better than six knots and now there were currents swinging out eastward from the Mangareva groups pushing him off his true course.

All this would bring him to Tia Rau unpleasantly close to nightfall, to a place where shallow waters seethed over corrugated coral ridges. There was no moon; even on a clear night it would be a foolhardy approach. Safety called for daylight, little wind—preferably a calm, not like this one, but a time of placid and clear water where a man from the spreaders could read the changing hue of water as a scientist reads a spectroscope and con a way safety through. But he kept on for a couple of hours and then he went forward to where Timoteo now lay in the bows, brought up from below for air, torpid, his lips puffing out at each breath. He had been dead to the world for thirty-seven hours with the alcohol slowly oozing out of his system, the fumes dying away in his brain.

Kitchell had been content to let him remain insensible. Now he needed him to supplement his own recollection of how far about Tia Rau the reefs rose dangerously close to the surface. He had had no option, no chance of computing before his hurried start at what time of the day or night he might arrive and still it was imperative he must get there *first*, regardless of immediate conditions, ready to take instant advantage of the first possibility of securing possession.

It took three buckets of water, flung over Timoteo's naked body, to bring him back to consciousness and then his return was not immediate. The diver lay on the deck, unthinking, used to the planks under him, the thrust of the schooner through the seas, his eyes open and recognition gradually dawning in them, then surprize, alarm—swift terror as recollection rushed upon him.

"It's all right, Tim," said Kitchell, squatting beside him. "You came off to the *Marama*, like I told you to. You're safe at sea."

"How about Harrisi?" Timoteo asked.

"You stabbed him in the chest. He's not dead yet. Come along down to the cabin."

It was not Kitchell's plan to divulge immediately the truth that Harris had been pronounced out of danger and, if he kept Timoteo closely with him, away from the crew, the diver would continue to consider himself in jeopardy, be the more willing to do what Kitchell asked of him. Below, he poured out a stiff jolt of Scotch and Timoteo downed it in the knowledge that it would brace him up though his nose wrinkled at the smell of the liquor.

"*Maitai,*"[*] he said as he set down the glass, "Kitisele, tell me what happen. Harrisi call me —— *Kanaka*, I savvy that. He push me and I push back. Harrisi make smash at me and then I get too —— mad. What kind I do, Kitisele? Plenty *pirikia*[†] I think."

"*Pirikia* all right," Kitchell answered. "But I can take care of that, Timoteo, if you do what I want you to."

"You give me one more drink *wikisi* I do any —— thing."

Kitchell accepted that rash pledge. Even as the last drop trickled down the half-white's gullet, the swift reactions of his type overtook him. Suspicion mounted. Kitiseli was his friend, it was true, but Timoteo was a crack diver, Kitiseli was a smart pearler and there were axes to grind.

"What place you go, what you want me do?" he asked.

Kitchell could have given him another drink or two and got a promise out of him, but a vow was not always a performance under such circumstances. He set out to persuade Timoteo to help him and that proved no easy task.

"What name you go along that place?" he asked. "I tell you one time I fool that king shark. Suppose I come back he get me, get you—sure."

And with superstitious, deep-seated dread, he went on to insist that the king shark was angry now for their daring to venture back after the pearls that he guarded. It was a fairy tale that Timoteo firmly believed. The danger was aggravated by the fact that Masi was also on the way—that the king shark could not be fooled, had already started to bring about bad weather. And it was a mighty proof of Timoteo's sense of obligation that made him promise that, if the weather was good, he might dive for the man who had saved him from *l'Ile Nu*. It was bad water all about Tia Rau, he said, for a radius of five miles, a labyrinth of reefs, a lasher of white water when the tides were running, a treasure guarded by dragon fangs of coral and the followers of the king shark.

"You too close up," he exclaimed when Kitchell told him their approximate position. "Better you go that way."

He pointed into the dead eye of the east. "Come back tomorrow, come back nex' day if weather no good."

The barometer registered twenty-eight sixty. It meant nothing to Timoteo but he had other signs and portents. His face clouded and he shook his head when they reached the deck.

A sooty, diaphanous fabric of brown was lifting all around the rim of the sea. And, out of the vault of that metallic sky there came—from everywhere—from nowhere—a low but distinct sound exactly like the sound that comes to the ear from the hollow of a shell.

SUDDENLY wind flawed the dead sea, a quick explosion of it as if a giant blister had been pricked and the vacuum inside it had wrought swift turmoil. It struck the *Marama* on the starboard bow and the driving seas that followed battered her until the schooner rose like a balky horse. Then the puff was gone. But Kitchell, following the line of Timoteo's pointing finger, saw a line of dirty white stretched across the sea, aft, coming on at furious speed, the wind above it lashing the sullen, heavy water into yeasty pyramids while the dark sky came swooping down and the breath of the gale was stingingly cold in comparison with the sticky, smelly heat in which they had been enveloped.

He saw—even as he swung the schooner about to meet the onslaught, spindrift flying in advance like a snow flurry, the flakes coming horizontally, wet on his cheek—and he wondered whether the yawl was caught in that furious welter or whether she had flung out a sea anchor.

The furious seas leaped at the *Marama* as if they had hoped to take her in flank and so were now doubly angered by her facing them. The schooner hurdled them like a racehorse, buoyant, her churning screw revolving to the measured *chug-a-chug* of the engine, gripping the water, holding her to it, bows on, as Kitchell gripped the wheel and held her steady while waves roared and smote and were speared on the bowsprit in great masses of water, tawny as springing tigers, with foaming, ravening jaws.

The billows seemed to run at random, lifting the *Marama* with resounding blows that tested every plank and seam in her, pitching her wildly, smiting both bows, tearing at her flanks. The engine gave her steerage-way, but that was all. She was being forced slowly but inevitably backward—toward the reefs of Tia Rau—and it was the best she could do until the storm blew out—to resist stubbornly, foot by foot, fighting a losing fight if this was a true gale; with chances to win, if it was only a black squall. The storm howled, hearing was impossible, speech only to be shouted into a hand-cupped ear, sight almost wiped out with the steady streams of spume.

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[*] Good.
[†] Trouble.

Half an hour of this and the rain arrived, prefaced by glares of lightning and crashes of immediate thunder. The downpour came as if detached masses of water were being hurled through space at irregular intervals. At rare moments, between the pounding of the billows and the cannonade of the thunder, there came the noise of the wind shrieking through the rigging like a horde of lost souls and the unseen fingers of the storm ruffled the furled canvas, plucked at every loose end and lifted their hair until they could feel the tug of it on their scalps.

Then—abruptly as a coward who makes up his mind that the field is lost—the faithful engine deserted. It was by now as dark as the middle of the night. Kitchell had got a light in the main cabin, two lanterns by the engine which had been doing such valiant work. In a frightful stab of light that opened the black heart of the storm he saw the fearfully rolling eyes of his *Kanakas* and the curiously pinched features of Timoteo, the bow of the *Marama* in apparent convulsion against spouting, triumphant seas. He felt her fall off, tremble as her side was exposed to blast upon blast and she rolled toward the trough of two ravishing waves, down into a valley of the shadow of death.

Kitchell came of a fighting, bulldog breed and he did what he could. The engine would not take the petrol, whether through obstruction in the gas line or through water in the essence, he never determined. A hasty sea-anchor was flung over while a better was prepared and they dragged to it, sagging backward, fathom by fathom, toward the shoals. Once he thought desperately of trying to get a little canvas on her, storm-sail and jib, but his crew was demoralized, the task of bending the sail no light one and the wind was blasting from the north with such fury that he could not hope to claw off.

The barometer had steadied, was even rising slightly but it was far below normal, announcing danger—deadly danger.

Toward sunset the gale distinctly abated and it began to lighten slowly, but disaster still sailed with them. The sea-anchor line parted. By a sickly gleam in the west there showed, close astern, a wild waste of water. It stretched out to starboard—to port. It seemed a miracle that they had not yet struck but, dragging as they had, lacking resistance, they had naturally entered the one navigable channel that chanced to be aligned with the direction of the wind.

Kitchell remembered sickeningly that it zigzagged at sharp angles, as most reef passages do, saw confirmation in Timoteo's face, saw the diver pointing, as he clutched at Kitchell's arm, to a sharp fin sickling its way through the race of liquid marble.

"Ta moi!"[*] screamed Timoteo with all the conviction of a witchmaster.

An upper tail-lobe trailed the back-fin, far apart. Here was the king of sharks indeed! It was no moment for close calculation but Kitchell had never glimpsed such distance between dorsal and caudal, never visioned such a diabolical bulk as that which showed for an instant under the stream of mottled water, slowly turning with—he could have sworn—one eye gleaming in cold malice and anticipation.

The next second they struck. The schooner heeled, lifted, was flung to a higher ledge and crashed down on the coral in a vortex of tumultuous water that whirled and tossed her, pawed her like a cat a mouse, ground her across the reef in less than half a fathom, the sharp points ripping through keel and strake while all aboard clung for their lives to the nearest hold, while two of her boats were stove in, crumpled, torn and blown away, while the gaskets loosened on her mainsail and the freed canvas bellied and rose shudderingly as if it was the ghost of the doomed vessel.

The gleam in the west widened, showed through the rift a crimson glow that shone on the battered hull like blood, as wind and sea wedged her fast

The mainmast broke like a carrot as the wind roared into the bag of the lifting sail. The starboard stays tore out of the rail and the wire ends whipped like the lash of the furies. The one boat left—to port—already damaged, was splintered by the crash of the upper mast. Frightful gusts came, blast upon blast, driving them gratingly across the shoal while the gleam in the west widened like an open wound—blood red.

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[*] *The King* (shark).

Helpless as a bubble that blows across the floor, wind and sea wedged her fast and hard at last in a crevice of the coral, a hundred feet from the channel. Less than five cables' lengths away—Kitchell had come within half a mile of his goal—a furious ring of water geysered, the spouts incarnadined by the crimson of the dying sunset—Tia Rau!

The tide was ebbing and the shallow water was in a turmoil that hammered at the lost schooner, heeling over on one shattered side as the tide fell; the sea flowing freely into the broken hull through a dozen wounds torn by the jags of coral. The sunset burned out, the storm slowly subsided and a few stars showed palely through the breaking wrack, seeming as if they flew by overhead as the vapors streamed south.

It was goblin night for Timoteo and the crew, one of despondency that bordered on despair for Kitchell. He had not merely lost his schooner but he had come to an end. Even if the weather became fine their fate, if delayed, would be all the more ghastly. Provisions and water were limited. They might rig some protection against the sun but they could not avoid starvation and thirst. If they built a raft there was scant chance of getting clear, aside from the question of food and water.

With the darkness the brine became a luminous wash. During the ebb the shoals were all white water and, in that foaming mass that hissed all about them as they perched on the slanting deck, it seemed that every bubble was a translucent jewel shifting from green to blue. At times the whole of it appeared like a troubled lake of burning alcohol.

In the channel, with deeper water, the living sea-fire was less generally diffused but not less emphatic. There were v's of radiance splitting the channel with fearful regularity as, all through the night, the great shark, followed by six others in a formation that never varied, cruised up and down with the precision of a defined patrol. The whole, prodigious length of the king shark was at times faintly outlined—a ghostly, lambent mammoth of the sea, the others monsters, although dwarfed by their leader.

Seven of them. There were scores of others dimly discernible in the zigzags of the channel, hundreds beyond doubt; thousands more within scenting distance, but the ward of the channel opposite the wrecked schooner was given over to the king shark and his trailers. There were seven men aboard—Kitchell, the three of the regular crew, the two divers—and Timoteo. It was small wonder that the natives believed that the big brute and his favored followers had deliberately preempted the passage and were waiting for them.

Kitchell, pondering over the chances of a raft, saw plainly that he would have to get rid of the king shark before he could get any one aboard his float, saw that chances of getting by these great fish were slight.

Timoteo was telling in a low tone one of the innumerable tales, common to every seaward tribe, of a canoe migration, an attack by sharks and the engulfment and devouring of all but the one inevitable canoe-load of survivors. That there was truth in these tales was certain, that the natives gave implicit credence to them was evident. And to them, as to Timoteo, the great shark was truly a water wizard, an angry god, guardian of a treasure that Timoteo had rashly striven to ravish, resolved on their transmutation into sacrificial meals. Some degree of awe came even to the prosaic Kitchell, noting that steady traverse.

He judged the leader to be nearer fifty feet than forty, the others approximating the latter measurement. If only the seven of them chose to make a deliberate attack upon an open boat they would be more than merely dangerous, to passengers upon a low-floating raft they would be a deadly menace. And he did not share the conviction of the crew that an attack would be limited to that number.

The wind died, sprang up again, softly, from its normal direction, south and east. The flood tide welled up with barely a ripple as it deepened on the flats, flowing in dimpled eddies over the hollows and channels, rising with no more disturbance than if a cistern was being filled from the bottom. The sky cleared entirely, brightly scaled with stars that the water doubled. And everywhere, between these reflections, other stars appeared, rising from the bottom in strange phenomenon. They seemed like illuminated bubbles of brilliant phosphorescent light rising in all directions, darting along the surface of the water and vanishing, leaving fiery trails behind them at the end of which new stars appeared to form.

The natives gazed at these signs and portents convinced of sea magic, of sprites attending the king shark, weaving spells so that there should be no escape. They shivered, their teeth chattered and, by the starlight, Kitchell could see the whites of their rolling eyes, turned now toward the marine illumination, now to Timoteo, who was their Jonah, who had brought all this upon them by first disturbing the treasure of Tia Rau.

With the top of the flood—or close to it—another horror commenced. The king shark and his grisly escort, emboldened by the deepening water, left the channel and coursed through the starry tide to the stranded *Marama*, circling about her, coming closer and closer until their gray, rough hides scraped against the hull raspingly or sheered off a little, avoiding the tangle of broken mast and shrouds. Their small eyes, wicked in their set stare, seemed fixed on the seven men perched along the broken rail. They rubbed up against the wreck like great cats. Each huge body was enveloped in a greenish, transparent caul of phosphorescence that gave them a ghoulish, spectral appearance as if they were veritable demons of the deep.

Even to Kitchell they looked uncanny, but it was their enormous size that impressed and worried him. The king shark was almost as long as the schooner. When its tail passed the portside mainsail stays its snout was even with the stem. It was easily fifty feet in length. The suggestion of patience, of surety of reward, of repressed rapacity and speed, was hypnotic and he felt an impulse, faint but unmistakeable, to slide down to the expectant brute that, as if it read his mind, or knew its wizardry was beginning to work, rolled leisurely over as it swam, crumpling the greenish aura that trailed with it, and opened its enormous maw, the hinges all of two feet apart.

"You're too —— sure, you brute," Kitchell said to it aloud. "I'll make matters warm for you, my friend!"

Timoteo and the five *Kanakas* stared at the circling sea-beasts as if in a trance, benumbed by terror.

* * *

THE false dawn was showing, the stars in sky and sea paling, when he took the hazard he had resolved upon that necessitated entrance to the main cabin. The deck sloped at an angle well over fifty degrees, the skylight was fast closed from within, the companion hood was partly under water and, to reach the doors, he had to go perilously near those gliding, confident monsters. But he knew he could get what he was after. The schooner had heeled on her port side, the starboard closets of the cabin, the starboard transom with its cushions covering lockers, his own stateroom were out of water. So the galley and the storeroom adjoining.

He let himself gingerly down the slanting planks, paying out from a halyard secured to a cleat, working at the doors. The king shark backed off, flicked its mighty pectorals and came with a lightning rush, over the broken and submerged rail, half stranding itself, snout out and bristling jaws agape in its effort to reach him while Kitchell hauled himself back. The rush took the shark into the tangle of shattered spar and stays and it thrashed itself free in a frenzy of rage, churning the water into spray.

Kitchell knew it would not venture so close again after that experience, but it took all his own will to lower once more and tackle the doors again. The slide was swollen and he had hard work to get it back and release the panels. Then he went down the companionway to the cabin, dimly lighted by the gray of early morning filtering through the skylight. The lamp swung in its gimbals, extinguished but not broken by the shock of striking the reef. He found matches in the galley and relighted it.

The barometers, pendent from their hooks, satirically announced the immediate weather as "good." The glass had risen steadily since the wind changed. The hand of the aneroid was steady at "fair." He gave them merely a glance before he opened the padlock of the after-starboard locker with a key from the bunch in his pocket and took out a small wooden box that held a dozen sticks of forty per cent. dynamite, carefully packed in sawdust. A tin box held fuse, a smaller one detonator caps.

In the galley he collected several cans of salmon. In his own stateroom he procured a bottle of whisky. He made two trips of it back to the rail. True dawn was now flushing in the east, color coming out on sky and sea like a tinted magic-lantern slide brought slowly into focus.

He gave an opened can of salmon each to Timoteo and the crew, served out a measure of grog for all of them, backed his own drink with a couple of captain's biscuits and, as he munched them, made his preparation for literally exploding any idea of the king shark's wizardry. They watched him silently, aware of the white man's *mana*, credulous of the godlike magic of the shark.

"Dynamite no kill that shark," opined Timoteo.

"You watch and see," said Kitchell.

They were all more or less heartened by the food and liquor and he meant to make his experiment while they were in that mood.

"I kill that shark," he said. "Bimeby maybe we make raft."

He had not forgotten the chance of the yawl having won through the squall, perhaps having avoided it. That was after all, their main hope. For the strengthening light showed scores of fins sickling the surface. There was prime feeding on the shallows for bonito and sea-pike and dolphin. Perhaps the sharks chased the hunters, perhaps they themselves were content with the smaller fry that could be chased in schools. Kitchell was inclined to the belief that the seven sharks came on their lone patrol from the fact that they represented the only local representatives of a distinct species—the number being the same as that of the crew was, of course, a coincidence.

He hated to be taken off by Macy in the yawl, to go back to Hikueru as a trophy of Macy's bravery and heroism. He hated failure more than the ordinary man and he hated worst of all to appear before Lisette and admit that, despite his fast vessel and his engine, he had come to grief and allowed Macy to prove himself the better man. He recognized that it was tacitly understood between himself and Lisette that he was to get the pearls, that she would be impatient of failure. And he had boasted.

He swept the luminous horizon with the glasses that were still on their hook at the head of the companionway. There was no sail. No sign of the yawl. He was glad of it, he told himself. Not that he wished deliberate ill to Macy. Now he would make the raft, rig sail and, with their easting, the wind should blow them, within a few days, in sight of some island of the group. But first he had to get rid of the king shark. Unless he did, nothing would coax the natives into even building a float, much less trusting themselves to it. And they must depend upon mast and sail. In all the stories of catastrophe the trouble had begun by the sharks grabbing the paddles.

He would have liked to use a full stick of dynamite but he feared the effects of explosion on the broken schooner. It might be blasted from the reef crevice and badly shattered before they completed preparations to get away, or they themselves might be stunned and flung into the water. So he took half sticks of the greasy stuff, poked a hole with a pencil in four of the pieces, crimped the caps with his teeth on to four-inch lengths of fuse, split the fuse with his knife for three-quarters of an inch, splayed it out and inserted the ends of matches in the split.

Then he tested the burning of the fuse with his watch. A minute to the foot. Twenty seconds to the cap, cut down by the quicker burning split-end.

He set his bombs handy, Timoteo and the *Kanakas* watching every move, their bodies motionless, only their heads moving to angular poses—like so many apes.

Now he had to coax the king shark away from too close proximity to the schooner. The salmon he was carrying was a cheap brand of dog-salmon, pale in color but oily and strong of fishy odor and flavor, dear to the heart of a native. It came out of the well-opened can in a compact cylinder. One of these he tossed to the king shark as the beast came on its round, the others behind it, two by two, *en echelon*.

It was like feeding peanuts to an elephant. The enormous brute rolled and the savory morsel seemed to fall directly into the crescent-shaped mouth, so exquisitely did the shark judge pace and distance. It sailed on serenely and again came around. The next time Kitchell tossed the chunk of salmon farther out and the fish swerved without flurry to catch once more accurately the lure. On the fourth round he had thrown out the bait as far as he judged he could fling the dynamite. By now he was sure that the shark expected to receive a chunk every time it completed the circle about the schooner, now widened considerably. All that he anticipated was that the shark would see a morsel descending through the air. Tickled appetite and curiosity would do the rest.

He stood by the rail, a lighted cigaret between his lips, balanced ready for the throw. The great shape came on, plainly seen. Now its whitish underbody showed slightly. Kitchell held the half-stick in his right hand, touched cigaret to match-head. The fuse sputtered and he raised his arm counting seconds—

"One-one—two-two—three-three — four-four—five-five."

It was like an incantation to the natives though he felt they had small faith in the results. Kitchell had used dynamite before. He carried it for the dual purpose of procuring fish by stunning them with an explosion just above the surface of the water, and for reef blasting. He had seen natives minus an arm from careless handling, inaccurate timing, uncertain fuses. And this called for as great a nicety of aim and timing as the shark's moves to secure the salmon.

With his arm drawn back he watched the fuse with the red fire eating into its white plait—flung it in an arc as the shark rolled farther over, confident of another titbit.

It exploded just as it touched the water. It might even have been slightly beneath the surface with the end of the fuse unextinguished where the dynamite protected it. Timoteo swore ever afterward that the shark rose and took it in its mouth.

There was a lifting fountain of spray, the convulsed form of a great fish that flung itself part way out of the water and fell back mangled, its head pouring blood that scummed the surface and spread in wide streamers as Kitchell flung his second bomb. Then the wild ravening rush of blood-crazy brutes tearing at the quivering body of their leader. He gave them two more half-sticks and the turmoil increased. Other sharks came thronging for a share of the living feast, thick as gulls that fight over galley scraps. Slowly the struggle moved away toward the channel, the eyes of the natives and of Timoteo glued upon it.

"Your shark was not a king shark, not a spirit fish, not a god," said Kitchell. "Only a big one, and now he and two of those with him are in the bellies of the rest. Let us build a raft."

But Timoteo shook his head.

"Maybe it was only a big fish," he said. "All same, raft no good. You no savvy those shark, Kitiseli. Suppose you have plenty empty barrel for put under plank, make raft plenty high, maybe then all right. But those shark too smart when they hungry. Maybe they are not wise like gods, but they savvy us. Too wise, I tell you, too much they like *kaikai** men. For one—two week they follow canoe, they follow raft. Some one side, push up. Other side they swim like ——, come right up on raft, all same the big one come on deck along he try to get you that time. If wind come, it make more easy for them, more hard for us. I tell you, Kitiseli, raft no good. Better we stay here. Maybe yawl come, maybe some other ship come. Better we stay, make signal, make smoke——"

"If the wind comes up again we'll be battered to bits. Then we'll have to chance it on a raft. Better try it while the weather promises to be fair."

"Weather good long time now," said Timoteo. "Raft no good. Better we stay."

It was plain the rest agreed with him. And in his heart Kitchell concurred. He couldn't blast his way across the sea. He might kill a hundred sharks with dynamite and rifles but there were hundreds more. Tia Rau was their rendezvous. Still——

"Yawl come," said Timoteo.

He was right. It sailed into the field of Kitchell's lenses, reaching in from the east. Timoteo and the natives were galvanized into excited joy. Kitchell looked at the yawl glumly. He was glad, in unexpressed measure, that the rest would be taken off, for himself he did not seem to care. He had known that there were other things beside sharks to handicap a raft from reaching land before they starved; the currents of the dangerous Archipelago, ever changing from east to west, the evaporation from the lagoons that backed up the southeast trade and made it blow southwest, things that made the ship insurance rate in the Paumotus eighteen per cent., that set the life of trading ships at an average of less than six years, things not understood by Timoteo. And he valued his own life but, in the face of coming humiliation, he almost wished that he had gone down in the squall.

The yawl tacked, beating up for the south end of the channel that made a sea ravine between the plateau and the outlying crater cone on which the coral insects had raised the flats and the atoll of Tia Rau. That was good seamanship—to have a following wind in navigating that tortuous passage.

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*Eat.

Bye and bye Kitchell, through his glass, could see men in the bows looking at the wreck, one in the main spreaders conning out the channel. Under that sky, with that limpid, pellucid sea that was barely ruffled by the gentle but steady resumption of the trade, the course would show as clearly as a ribbon of dark blue laid on silks of light green and mauve. Mauve for weedy patches, every shade of translucent green to milky jade for the varying shallows.

The channel led up to the actual wall of the circular reef about the atoll of Tia Rau. The tide was falling now. There would be plenty of water and Macy would get an anchor ashore on Tia Rau and swing to the tide, with perhaps a kedge carried across the channel, the stage all set for entering Tia Rau and starting to dive while the weather was fair. It was Macy's luck as Kitchell's had been the opposite.

The yawl seemed to crawl as it made its southing, then squared off, coming up toward them, inhauling and outhauling sheets as the zigzags of the channel dictated. On one of the slants Kitchell made out Macy at the wheel. About him the crew was chattering, waving their loin-cloths, naked as baboons.

Fairly off the atoll-ring the yawl's booms came in, a boat made for the reef, already showing plainly above water. A dinghy was pulled hard across channel. Soon she swung, anchored, bow and stern, in a roomy berth. Blow north, blow south, she could run before it and get to the open sea. The sixteen-foot whaleboat that had placed the anchor on the reef now pulled up channel toward the ill-fated schooner where Kitchell sat on the rail unanswering the shout that came from Macy, handling the stern-oar of his boat, four men, seated two abreast, sending the double-ender ahead with quick strokes of the oars.

IN THIS preface to his ultimate humiliation Kitchell had forgotten all about the sharks. There were not any to be seen at that moment. Either the entry of the yawl into the channel had scattered them for the time or sent them well below the surface. The sight of the whaleboat, coming so confidently on, did not suggest the danger that Timoteo had talked of in connection with the raft. Kitchell's mind was sluggish just then, his whole attitude introspective. Timoteo and the *Kanakas* were elated beyond their ordinary status by the prospect of rescue.

The whaleboat left the channel toward the schooner wedged in the rift on the comparative flats of the coral-veneered submarine plateau. There was only about a hundred feet of this, a little over thirty yards, less than the depth of an ordinary building lot. Thirty strokes of the oars.

And, before ten of them were taken, tragedy loomed, catastrophe appeared. Sharks showed suddenly as if they had lain in ambush, springing from sea jungles. Kitchell could see the rush as he shouted a useless warning, a hoarse cry as he watched the onslaught. The king shark and two of his gigantic followers had been despatched, buried. The other four led the assault, their appetites whetted with the blood of their own for the live meat in the boat, five practically defenceless creatures with four convenient limbs by which to catch them, soft, fleshy bodies without shell or scales or tough hide, luscious as ripe plums to a schoolboy.

The tide was lowering steadily and knowledge of that may have urged them to the concerted and savage attack. A brute caught hold of Macy's steering-oar, sheared through the blade, caught the stump as Macy used it for a lance and nearly twisted him overboard. Two other oars, both on one side, were severed in the same way. The noses of the beasts joggled the buoyant whaleboat that swung uncertainly while the sharks came with rushes that rocked it, lifted it as men play with the ball at water-polo, keeping it in imminent peril of capsizing while the rowers, their bronze skins ashen with terror, bludgeoned and drove impotently at the sea-tigers.

Kitchell could not use his bombs. The distance was too far for heaving a rope. The end was imminent. The blades were bitten off the remaining oars, the boat had no means of propulsion and the sharks surged about it as thick as fans striving to lift a victorious player to their shoulders, nuzzling the craft, rocking it, surging out of the water till their pectoral fins showed, cold-blooded, relentless, determined. Horror was hovering over the scene, as the boat slowly neared the schooner, jolted by the great fish.

Kitchell bent the severed end of the mainsheet to his sounding-line, the lead still attached. He stood up and swung it over his head, shouting at Macy, jabbing at a mottled brute that lunged for him. Macy heard him and, with feet wide part, braced in the bottom of the joggling boat, held high the shaft of his oar. The short circles sang viciously through the air and then the plummet flew, swift and straight. The boat lurched from a thrust of one of the big sharks and the line sang a little to one side. But Macy swung at it, intercepted it and it coiled around and around the oar staff.

The next second three pairs of hands overhauled line and sheet and made the latter fast while Kitchell, with Timoteo and the rest, hauled on to it and brought the whaleboat dancing alongside. Quickly the five men scrambled over the slope of the hull, aided by willing hands. The baffled sharks followed, nosed together as if in consultation and cruised uneasily up and down, disliking the diminishing water, deciding to depart. Kitchell flung a bomb after them and there was a wild flurry for a few moments as the injured were dispatched. Then they were gone; no more fins showed on the flats or in the channel.

Macy gripped Kitchell by the hand, his eyes shining in the old way. There was nothing but friendship existing between them at that moment.

"You saved my life, Jim," said Macy. "Quick work, too, with the old bean and the old bone. You pitch like a major-leaguer, old scout."

He strove, as men will, to speak lightly to the back of danger passed.

"Call that end of it even," said Kitchell gruffly. "You were coming to save mine. Never would have got out of this, Tom, but for you. Boats smashed. You see what would have happened to a raft. But I've got some extra oars below. Tide's falling. Those beggars'll keep off the shoals as soon as it's down a bit more."

"The old hooker's gone, Jim. Tough luck. Any insurance?"

"Only my own. I used to write off twenty per cent. a year."

"That commercial style of doing business is beyond me. Overhead and depreciation in the pearling game sound funny to me. I suppose you were after the pearls. How in the —— did you get Timoteo to come along? I tried to but he wouldn't hear of it."

It was plain to Kitchell that Macy did not connect Lisette with Kitchell's trip to Tia Rau but rather with Timoteo. Kitchell told him of the diver's trouble with Harris, of the killing of the king shark while his men got up spare oars, some stores and a bottle of whisky and a box of cigars from Kitchell's stateroom. The two rivals sat on the rail smoking and drinking as if the being together on the tilted deck of a stranded schooner on the outskirts of the Dangerous Archipelago were the most natural picnic in the world.

"It was your own idea to come, then?" said Macy. "We'll go halves, of course, with a share out for Timoteo. After all, it's his atoll."

"It wasn't exactly my own idea," said Kitchell slowly. "I had thought of it, but I got the suggestion from somebody else. We'll talk about it later," he added.

There was no sense in having the details of their rivalry bandied about by the natives and later retailed at Hikueru.

"Right you are," said Macy, but he looked sharply at Kitchell.

The gap had widened between them again. Lisette stood in it, her white arms pushing them farther apart. Kitchell could almost conjure up the vision.

"Here's how," said Macy perfunctorily, finishing his glass and standing up. "How about getting the stores aboard? Anything else you want to bring along, of course."

"Instruments mainly," said Kitchell shortly.

THERE was no break in the reef of Tai Rau because there was no fresh water to kill the coral insects and leave a gap in the rampart. There are few of the islands of the Dangerous Archipelago that have entrances to their lagoons. But the barrier kept out sharks except at the highest water. A boat had been hauled across the coral to the lagoon and Timoteo sat on a thwart, important as became the best diver in the Paumotus, "taking his wind," inflating his lungs to their fullest capacity, exhaling air through his lips with a low, whistling sound. Another diver imitated him.

Timoeo had agreed to dive. The proof of the ordinary mortality of the king shark had made him his own man again and his agreement had made the rest ready to go down in their turn. This much Kitchell had accomplished. Timoteo was to have a quarter of all the pearls, by right of his first discovery and his being again on the ground, and because of his infinite superiority as a diver.

He did not descend blindly. He had carefully surveyed the bottom of seven fathoms greatest depth through his water glass, a box twelve inches deep, sixteen inches square at the top with a notch in which to rest the neck, tapering to twelve inches square at the bottom. He had pointed out the pearl-weed that showed favoring conditions for pearl-bearing oysters and he had located patches of shell his experience told him were likely to be rich in gems, seeing as clearly through the glass as if the bottom had been six feet away instead of thirty-six. The sun was almost overhead, its rays penetrating the clear water with little refraction.

Kitchell was aboard the yawl, in the cabin. He had given Timoteo free agency, permitted his own men to dive for wages and premiums on special finds. Macy was in the boat, eager to draw the lottery of the embryo lagoon.

Timoteo was naked and oiled. He had a bag net of coconut-fiber, twenty inches deep and twelve across, with meshes of two and a half inch that would carry all the shells he could bring to the surface. Instead of a knife, since there were no sharks, he had a pearl-shell to loosen the oysters from their bed and to remove obstacles. On his right hand was a coarse white cotton mitten. The other man was similarly equipped.

At last he stood up, his barrel-chest expanded, a light bronze statue under the sun.

He pointed toward the bottom, bidding Macy take up the water-glass. Macy saw, far down, a wide bed of mammoth shells, their strongly ribbed, wavy and frilled valves apart, showing the giant molluscs within. They were fantastically colored with an iridescent glare of blue and violet, variegated with fantastic orange and yellow markings. The effect was that of a beautiful bed of rare flowers growing in a rockery. These were the meaty bodies of the giant or furbelow clams, the *tridacna gigans*, bulking from two to three feet across.

"My word, better you keep away from those fella," said Timoteo, half in warning to his fellow diver, half to show off his knowledge. "Suppose you cut one arm, one leg along there, they hold you plenty fast. Suppose you not chop off plenty quick you drown —— soon."

He motioned to Macy to paddle the boat forward, slid overside, holding on to the rail with one hand while he adjusted his glass to be sure of a particular patch of shell. With a last gulp of air he let go the glass and sank feet foremost for ten feet when he turned over and swam to the bottom with easy movements of his legs, picking over pieces of coral, brushing aside broken shell and debris, for all the world as if he was working in a garden, filling his bag leisurely but with no wasted action.

Two minutes passed—a half—ten seconds more—and Timoteo stood erect and came up as if he was being hauled out, shooting out of the water halfway to his waist, showing his white teeth in a smile.

There were a dozen oysters in his bag, heavy shells ribbed and twisted and curved like coral, ten to fourteen inches across, smoke-colored, of full maturity and surprizingly heavy.

"Pearl inside those, I bet you," said Timoteo as he swung easily into the boat.

When Macy came aboard Kitchell still sat in the cabin, smoking his pipe, glum and silent, merely nodding when Macy came down the companionway.

They had not discussed the question that lay moot between them. The recent mutual obligations were too fresh upon both of them though their fresh-found friendship was badly tarnished again. Kitchell was sure that Macy suspected a connection between Kitchell's attempt to get the pearls and Lisette. More, that he viewed the matter with a certain tolerance and humor that galled the Anzac.

But Macy showed nothing of this as he descended. His face was lighted with excitement as he displayed the prizes brought up in the day's diving, showing them to the listless Kitchell in a small shallow box of black lacquer, all save one pearl that he unwrapped from between layers of cotton wool. This was almost black, the color of gunmetal, extremely iridescent. So far, none of the gems were very large but nine out of every ten were flawless, symmetrical with skins free from flaws, most of them globular, a few pear-shaped. Six were bronze-tinted, true Gambier pearls.

"Don't know what we'd have done without Timoteo," said Macy. "They say there's one pearl in every thousand pearl oysters—and that's counting seeds and baroques. In a virgin lagoon like this the average goes up. I take it it's mighty roily here at times and more of 'em get sand-grains in their mantles. Though some claim it's a parasite makes the pearl. Sort of tapeworm. Anyway, the average is bound to be higher. Timoteo'll leave a dozen oysters to pick one out of a cluster. He's been hitting better than ten per cent. And that's better in pearling than five hundred for Cobb or Ruth. He goes down oftener and stays longer. He's been down ten times today. Brought up a hundred and thirty-nine oysters. Fifteen pearls in 'em. Black Beauty among his lot. Rest of 'em, your two men and mine, have been down twenty-eight times between 'em before they quit, brought up three hundred and twenty-seven shells—and five pearls. I'll say Timoteo's entitled to five out of the twenty. Fifteen to you and me, old scout, for the first day's diving. Going *some*. An easy thousand dollars—clear profit. Soon underwrite a new schooner at this rate.

"You don't seem very enthusiastic," he added, a little sourly, as Kitchell sat without offering to handle the gems, barely glancing at them.

Kitchell looked at him, blue eyes steady in his brick-colored face.

"Better lay our cards on the table, Tom," he said. "We're even on the life-saving end of it. You insist on our splitting on what pearls we get out of the lagoon, that is, splitting in half what is left after Timoteo gets his quarter and the men are paid off. That's mighty decent of you. I want to do the square thing, too. I'm still in your debt. You didn't have to split with me. I didn't mean to split with you if I got here first. I meant to keep you off."

"Hold on a minute. You knew I'd gone after the pearls. Timoteo told you?"

"No. Lisette told me."

"What?"

"I'd always thought she preferred you, Macy. You're a more likeable chap than I am. I've never made a hit with girls. Never tried to because I didn't have the aptitude. I did have a hazy idea of going after the pearls myself, as I told you before, but it was Lisette who actually suggested it. If I take any it's out of your bounty, because you've won. 'Don't let him get ahead of you,' Lisette told me and I meant not to. I'd have fought you for possession of the reef. Not so much on account of the pearls as of her. When she told me she'd marry me, I boasted I'd bring them back. I've lost out. Got piled up on a reef for you to take off. Lost my schooner. You could leave me here if you wanted to. You've won. You're the better man.

"Now, look here." He failed to see the expression with which Macy was staring at him, letting him talk and listening with narrowed eyes and a smile that was half a sneer. "I'm not keen on going back a failure. Or showing up with half of what we get out of your lagoon. I'll tell you what I'll do. Timoteo's a big asset. He wouldn't have been here except for his trouble with Harris. If I hadn't happened to suggest to him earlier that he'd better go off to my schooner and sleep out his jag he'd never have come aboard. That was luck. But if I hadn't shown him his king shark wasn't a god he wouldn't have dived in any event. I imagine the others would have balked too. So we'll put that to my credit. I'll take a quarter share and you can put me off at Mangareva. I'll donate the other quarter to Lisette. It was her suggestion that I come and she's got a sort of proprietary interest in the trip. Of course I leave the coast clear for you.

"I'm not sulking. But I'm not going back under false pretences, or playing second fiddle. Maybe that is sulking, if you like, but that's the way I feel about it.

"I'm going out of pearling. I went into it because, with luck I'd make up enough capital to go into copra planting. There's big money in that with modern methods. Using fertilizers, drying your copra with a furnace and eliminating mold and delay, shipping the oil instead of the meat. Working up by the by-products—coir for matting, refuse for fertilizer. I might even go into the soap business eventually. I'm primarily a business man. And pearling is like other gambling. There's a fair living in shell, but shell's playing out slowly. Too much competition, not enough replanting. Year in and year out, a man breaks about even if he depends on pearls same as playing cards. Unless you make a strike and put your money into a paying business. Put me off Mangareva and go on to Hikueru. You've won, Tom Macy, and good luck to you."

Macy continued to look at him queerly. Neither of them noticed Timoteo gazing down through the open skylight, curious to hear praise of himself, listening avidly to the white man's talk. Timoteo had his own ideas of honor, but eavesdropping was not a fault in his code.

"You're about a hundred per cent. white, Jim Kitchell," said Macy finally. "And square on all six sides. We've been pretty good pals, off and on. But I'd like to thrash this thing out a bit. You say that Lisette promised to marry you and suggested you should beat me out to the atoll after I'd gone."

"She knew you'd gone, yes. You had about four hours start. But the odds were with me. Your course happened to dodge the squall. When it came up I had you beaten. But you won."

"Yes, I won. You've had your talk. Now it's my turn."

Timoteo stole away noiselessly on his bare feet from the skylight, half an hour later, puzzled. He was half-white by blood but he had learned a lot of the white man's ways in the past forty-five minutes.

IT STAYED fair for eleven days and then it began to thicken up. The lagoon was not a large one and, thanks to Timoteo's selective skill, they had skimmed the cream of it. A tumbler failed to hold all the pearls they had gathered. There were two they did not put into the glass at all, a pair almost perfectly matched, slightly bronze, but fiery with soft color, almost the size of pigeon's eggs. Worth anywhere from ten to twenty thousand dollars, according to prevailing market values and the type of market in which they were sold. At the lowest computation there were thirty thousand dollars worth of gems, outside of Timoteo's share. Timoteo, with over seven thousand dollars for his portion was, for a half-white, a millionaire.

It was Sunday morning when they fetched Hikueru. And Sunday was a rest day. There were church services by the Mormon minister with the crowd gathered on the sand for the preaching and the *himines*. The concessions were closed, save for the *Muvis* and the radio program.

Jabez Bunker was entertaining the Resident in his house.

The yawl slipped in comparatively unnoticed and they dodged the greetings of the curious.

Lisette and her father, being Catholics, were not present at the services and Macy and Kitchell found her at the boarding-shack. It was Macy who made the presentation.

"There is a quarter share of all the pearls we found on Tai Rau in this package, Lisette," he said while she stared from one to another, her breast heaving, her eyes wide with excitement and curiosity. "It represents your share for suggesting to *us* that we make the trip."

He spoke in English for Kitchell's benefit.

"If you marry, as I suppose you will," Macy went on quietly while the girl set a nervous hand between her breasts, "it will furnish you with a *dot*. Kitchell and I are going into partnership, copra planting. We shall be leaving in a day or two. And we want to wish you all the luck in the world before we leave."

They left her fumbling with the package and strolled arm-in-arm to Bunker's shack to pay their respects to the Resident and to give out the news of their trove. Halfway they met Timoteo with Tuli on his arm. He stopped them.

"You speak I make up my mind along I go with you. All right. I am good diver. I know nothing about copra. And now I am rich. Besides, I am going to get married." He introduced the giggling Tuli. "Now, I not work any more," he told them. "Tuli, she good *fahine*, she not want to spend all my money. We live at Papeete. Have a good time. When you come along Papeete you stay along of us. *Aloha!*"

Bunker had his house full that afternoon while the pearls of Tia Rau were exhibited, appraised, and the owners envied and applauded. Macy and Kitchell were the last to leave at supper time with the Resident's congratulations ringing in their ears.

"They're both cured,"commented Bunker to his guest as the two went out together.

"Cured?" asked the Resident, frankly puzzled.

"Yes, sir. I know the symptoms of sickness and the signs of convalescence. They've bin inoculated and now they're plumb cured."

"Of what?"

"The most pernicious disease in the world, bar none. Commissioner, two weeks back those two lads were bein' made a fool of by a jadehopper named Lisette Lupin. She had 'em set by the ears an' she sends the pair of 'em off to Tia Rau to indulge her female longin' for excitement an' the settin' up of rivals. Didn't care which one won, so long's she did. I don't know the circumstances but I figger, 'cordin' to my experience with the sex, that she promised to marry both an' intended to take either, providin' he brings back the pearls.

"She overlooked one thing. Two. First, the two of 'em used to be friends and there ain't nothin' stronger than man-friendship in the long run. Second, a fever allus burns out, where it ain't fatal. An' the love of a young coof for what he thinks a gal is, an' what she makes him think she is, is jest a fever. Now the stools have slipped an' she's sittin' on the ground. That won't bother her long. She'll git up agen an' fix fresh ribbons in her cap. She's just a jadehopper.

"The pint is that those two lads have bin mortal sick an' now they're cured. Friends an' partners. There's jest time for another drink, Commissioner, afore they dish up thet turtle steak. What d'ye say if we mug up an' drink the health an' success of the pair of 'em?"

A little later Ah Chung sat in the cabin of the yawl, his face impassive but even his Oriental pulses quickening as he valued the two big pearls.

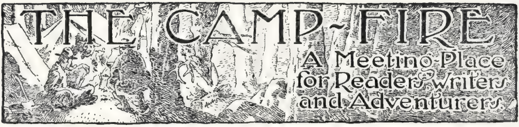
Opposite to him Macy and Kitchell sat on the transom. The right elbow of Kitchell and the left elbow of Macy were on the table. Kitchell's left hand was in his lap but the right hand of Macy rested lightly on the shoulder of his friend as they leaned forward.

Much as David and Jonathan might have sat. Or Damon and Pythias.

THE NORTH ROAD

by Laurence Edward Innes

NOT Italy with pink-lipped flaunting flowers,
Nor Spain with haunting dusk; such hours
Are cloying to the taste: I choose, instead,
The North Road, a man's road, bold, rough and red.
Tall timber, rocks, big seas and whirling snows,
Or Summertime, the time when giant blows
Of some full-breasted, sturdy, mothering Spring
Makes Earth anew.
I'd rather be a foot-sore king
On trails that trappers flung up there
Than be a cushion plutocrat—*that* for care
When muscles ripple like live bands of steel!
Ho! Northland!
Well, you see, friend, how I feel.
Bravado? Yes! It sounds that way down south,
But mush along, the wind against your mouth,
The sky above you clear and brave and wide,
And all of God's earth streaming by your side,
The words that come will be like beating drums,
Like bugles blown—no word too great, too strong,
To lift its voice to that majestic song.
Why, man! Environment but makes or breaks
And one who takes the North Road gladly takes
His place with rugged worlds: he grows
Like pines, as straight, as clean.
Although the rose
Has beauty, has it truth? God's Will! No lies
Can stand against those pines, those trails, those skies!



THE CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

AS ALREADY set forth, "Porto Bello Gold," the serial in this issue, is the story of how the treasure came to be on Treasure Island. The writing of the story was undertaken with the approval of Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson's literary executor.

THESE Europeans, Asians, Polynesians and Africans who were in this country before Columbus—an always interesting subject. The interesting theory tentatively advanced by Mr. Barker not having attained general acceptance, I sent his letter to J. D. Newsom, who, in addition to being a writer, is an archeologist. His opinion follows Mr. Barker's.

Hugh Pendexter has promised us some "dope" on certain pre-Columbus settlers in New England.

Brookline, Massachusetts.

To students of American Antiquities it is probably of general knowledge that the city of Lexington, Kentucky, stands nearly on the site of an ancient town, which, if one may judge by the wide range of its circumvallatory works and the quantity of ground it must have occupied, was one of great extent and magnificence.

It may, however, well be doubted if many of even such students are aware that in the year 1775 there was discovered there a catacomb containing a number of mummies, preserved by the art of embalming to as great a state of perfection as was known among the ancient Egyptians, eighteen hundred years before the Christian Era.

THIS extraordinary find was made by some of the early settlers, whose curiosity being excited by something unusual in the character of certain large stones, seeming to cover the entrance to a cavern of some sort, removed the same, coming to others whose singular appearance for stones in a natural state caused them to push their investigations further. These obstructions being taken away, the mouth of an apparently deep and gloomy cave was disclosed to their gaze. This proved to be a catacomb, formed in the bowels of the limestone rock, about fifteen feet below the surface of the earth. Having added to their numbers and provided lights, they descended and entered, without further obstruction, a spacious apartment, where they were astounded to find that at the sides and extreme ends were formed niches and compartments occupied by figures representing men.

Their surprize was much greater when, on further research and inquiry, it was found that these figures were actual mummies in the condition before stated.

Most unfortunately, the original discoverers were uneducated people and, it being at a period when a bloody and inveterate war was being carried on between the Indians and the whites, supposing, in their ignorance, that these were the remains of some tribe of Indians, a revengeful and vindictive spirit animated them to destruction.

They were dragged out into the air, the bandages torn open, the mummies kicked about, and a bonfire made of the most of what were undoubtedly the most ancient remains ever found on this continent.

FORTUNATELY for our further information, the eminent antiquarian, Mr. Ash, was permitted to make a complete examination of what remained. He found the descent to the caverni to be gradual, the width four feet, the height seven, and the entire length eighteen and a half rods, with a breadth of six and a half rods. Calculating from the niches and shelving on the sides, it was sufficiently capacious to have contained at least two thousand subjects. So far as he could learn from some of those who were present at the discovery and subsequent destruction, they "burnt up and destroyed hundreds." Nor could he obtain from the same source further information as to the fashion, manner and apparel of the mummies, save that they "were well lapped up," appeared sound, and consumed in the fire with a rapid flame.

Not content with this, however, he gleaned from the cavern such fragments as yet remained in the niches, on its shelving sides, and from the floor, the remains thus gathered up amounting to forty or fifty baskets, the dust of which was so light and pungent as to bring tears and sneezing to a troublesome degree. On a minute investigation, he separated from the general mass several pieces of human limbs, fragments of bodies, solid, sound, and apparently capable of eternal duration. In a cold state they had no smell whatsoever, but when submitted to the action of fire, gave out an agreeable odor similar to nothing to which he could compare it. The Kentuckians asserted that the features of the faces and the forms of the whole bodies were so well preserved that they must have been the exact representations of the once living subjects.

NOW these bodies were embalmed, how long preserved, by what nations, and from what people descended, no opinion can be formed save one of speculation and conjecture. There are no North American Indians known of who formed catacombs for their dead or who were acquainted with the art of preservation by embalming. The cavern was similar to those found in Egypt, where the dead were bestowed, wrapped up in linens, spices and aromatics of the East. In this particular case the cave was partly natural and partly artificial. The custom of embalming is purely Egyptian, being practised in their earliest days, two thousand years before Christ. Catacombs exactly like this one, with niches in their sides for their embalmed dead—vast excavations under ground—are numerous all over Egypt. A trait of so strong and palpable national practise, would lead to the belief that, wherever practised, the authors must have been either a colony direct from Egypt or the descendants of some nation of the countries of Africa acquainted with this art.

If the Egyptians are as reckoned, even in Scripture, the first of nations, if from them is derived the art of navigation, knowledge of astronomy, invention of letters, with many other arts such as agriculture, architecture, etc., why may it not be that the builders of the antiquated works about Lexington, including this immense catacomb with its contents, were, indeed, an Egyptian colony? As the art of embalming is peculiarly characteristic of that people and was here found in a state of perfection not exceeded by even the mother country itself, is it presumptuous to believe that the people who made this cavern and filled it with so many—perhaps thousands—of their embalmed dead, were, indeed, from Egypt? If they were not, whence shall we turn for a solution of the mystery? To what country shall we travel, and from what archives of past ages shall we gain further light on the subject.—Lewis A. Barker.

Philadelphia.

Mummification is undoubtedly one of the chief features of the later Egyptian culture-complex, but this hardly warrants the assumption that the bodies found in the Kentucky caves were those of Egyptians or Africans.

THE argument advanced in support of this hypothesis is faulty. To my knowledge the multiple burial chamber or catacomb was not used in Egypt. The quite common people of the Nile valley have left no monuments behind them; whether their dead were preserved or not is an open question. The kings and priests alone have left memorials and each individual poobah had his own tomb upon which he lavished tender care during his lifetime.

Niche burial is not an outstanding feature of the Egyptian method of disposal of the dead. It still finds favor among certain tribes of Australia and the ascetic castes of India, to mention but two out of many instances.

Mummification was practised until recent times by the Torres islanders, just north of Cape York, Australia. Specimens are preserved in the Sydney museum. The Khasi chiefs of Assam are embalmed; in Ceylon this practise endured until the 18th Century; it is common in Burma; well-preserved mummies have been found in the Canary Islands; the Incas were acquainted with the custom. Why not suggest that the Torres islanders founded the Lexington colony?

A VAST body of well-authenticated evidence is growing up which *tends* to show that a race of voyagers traveled far and wide from the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf about 2000 B. C. in search of precious metals and stones. They must have traveled in small bands and few women went with them, if any. Wherever they settled they intermarried with the indigenous population. Their descendants, knowing nothing of Egypt, having few of the physical characteristics of its people, nevertheless acquired their forbears' migratory tendency and seem to have reached South America where they implanted many elements of the megalithic culture.

Nothing travels more easily about the earth than an idea and the practise of borrowing cultural elements is quite common even today. It seems possible that the Kentuckians, without a drop of Egyptian blood in their veins, may have adopted the practise of mummification by the simplest of all methods—the contact of peoples.

No one today suggests that the Papuans are

Americans simply because they use Standard Oil. (Lowie, "Social Origins;" J. G. Frazer, "Golden Bow;" Elliot Smith, "Migrations of Early Culture;" "Evolution of the Dragon;" Eric Peet, "Rough Stone Monuments," etc., etc.)—J. D. NEWSOM.

CONCERNING his article in this issue a few words from Michael J. Phillips:

Santa Barbara, California.

The better part of last year, before quitting the newspaper game, I was engaged in a fascinating work. It was getting the life-stories of old people who had lived "Fifty Years and More in Santa Barbara," which was the title of the series, and publishing them, one a week, in the Santa Barbara *Daily News*.

It was great stuff and I loved to do it. I found several—some of whom I had to talk to by the aid of an interpreter—who had seen Fremont and other American invaders in the late forties during the Mexican War and who gave me interesting personal bits that had never been published.

I GOT so steamed up on the coming of the Pathfinder that I arranged a special series of four articles on "When Fremont Came to Santa Barbara," and spent several days in the upper end of the county, tracing his march from Nipomo, on the upper edge, to this city and through it to the Los Angeles line.

The enclosed article, based on these investigations, and talks with several of Don Julian Foxen's children and grandchildren, as well as perhaps a dozen other pioneers, is one of the results. I have every reason to believe that it is historically correct in all but the very slightest of details.

The story of how Don Julian helped Fremont fool the Californians is tradition; so are the descriptions of his horse, his (Fremont's) gracious and friendly manner, the struggle to cross San Marcos Pass, now a wonderful mountain drive; his entry into Santa Barbara on Sunday morning, Foxen's patriarchal life at the rancheria, and such touches as his race with the stage-driver and the fight with the grizzlies. I went over Fremont's route across this county, and visited his site on the creek in Foxen Cañon, still known as Fremont's camp. And here she is.—MICHAEL J. PHILLIPS.

AT THE last Camp-Fire in talking about the bonus, I advocated, in addition to the regular income tax and in addition to a practically confiscatory income tax on the increase in all incomes that increased during a war, a graduated income tax on *all* incomes, great and small (real veterans exempt), so that every one of us would have to pay enough to hurt as his or her part in the war instead of giving practically nothing or even gaining financially from the war. I suggested it as a most excellent plan for putting an end to wars.

Since that suggestion went to the printer, Captain Bruce Q. Nabers sent me a newspaper editorial that presents the same plan but developed to its full logical extent. (Of course neither that editorial or mine was written with any knowledge of the other.) My plan was only the first step in the right direction; theirs is, in its entirety and sound sense, a plan that *demands* the most careful consideration of every American and of every other citizen of a civilized nation.

We may not be Christian Scientists, but most people familiar with the newspaper field will admit without hesitation that, from a strictly newspaper point of view, the *Christian Science Monitor* is the best newspaper, not only in this country, but in the world. Captain Nabers writes "the response has been so general from Prime Ministers, Congressmen, publishers and just ordinary people that I knew you would be interested." I am. To me it looks like the only sure answer to the life and death question that confronts the world.

Read it:

November 15, 1923.

Today the entries for the Bok Peace Prize close. Being a free-for-all, with a $100,000 purse hung up, a large and eager field is to be anticipated. No handicaps are provided. The statesman with a lifetime of experience in international negotiations, the financier in touch with the money markets of the world, the journalist long trained in observation far afield, meet in competition with the dreamer and the idealist. Perhaps in the competition the latter has the advantage, for to him peace is real, normal, actual substance. To some of a wider and more practical experience, peace, enduring peace, seems, as honesty in politics appeared to Senator Ingalls, an iridescent dream. But cynicism is not the atmosphere in which either truth or right is to be found. As health, not disease, is the normal physical state of man, and honesty, not craft, his normal mental characteristic, so peace, not war, is the normal state of nations. With a sigh of relief the United States turned "back to normalcy" after the nightmare of the World War. Now the problem is to maintain the state thus attained.

THE *Christian Science Monitor* has offered to the committee on awards of the Bok plan no plan for the abolition of war and the furtherance of peace. Yet we yield to no one precedence in devotion to these ends. We pledge, in advance, respectful attention to any plan which this committee shall declare entitled to the prize offered by Mr. Bok. Whether the final end of peace shall be attained by even the universal acceptance of any plan which may now be formulated is perhaps debatable. But discussion will in itself make for a wider comprehension of the evils which disturb peace, and help in the creation of such a social mind that war shall be unthinkable. Such a mental attitude on the part of nations is in no way unattainable. It is possessed already by individuals. Every man, in his relations to his fellows, encounters now and then disputes and aggressions quite as important and irritating to him as most quarrels which lead to war are to nations. But the individual thinks in terms of order, self-restraint, mutual forbearance, or—at the worst—legal redress. His mind at the moment of some seemingly unjustifiable aggression does not fly to thoughts of fisticuffs or of murder. So the average man, after the boyhood age, passes through life without experience of violence. The average nation is organized with violence for one of its primary functions. It is not without significance that in the organization of the infant government of the United States the War Department was created at the moment the Constitution was adopted, and the Navy Department was the next to be established. Defense was, of course, the purpose, but the idea that the infant nation, though far removed from turbulent Europe, could by any chance escape aggression never entered the minds of the Founders.

WE THINK the proposition incontrovertible that the overwhelming majority of men detest and loathe anything even approaching violence in their daily life. If we are to abolish violence, and even the threat of violence, from international affairs, we must devise means for arraying against it all this natural hatred and loathing. Unhappily, men who hold themselves rigidly aloof from anything of the sort are frequently willing to encourage and applaud manifestations of the fighting instinct in others, particularly if they themselves can find a financial profit in it. If the promise of personal profit in war or in the threat of war, could be wholly removed, a great step would be taken toward the destruction of all incentive to war. If every citizen, however rich, however eminent, however venerable, in station or in years, should feel himself liable to be called upon for sacrifices commensurate with that of the poor boy whose life ebbed out in the wire entanglements of No Man's Land, there would be less inclination to preach war among the citizens and to vote for it among the Nation's lawmakers. To the end, therefore, that one nation at least may make the declaration of war as solemn, and as repugnant a thought as possible to all classes of people, The Christian Science Monitor would suggest the following national action:

The adoption of a constitutional amendment substantially as follows:

> In the event of a declaration of war, the property, equally with the persons, lives, and liberties of all citizens shall be subject to conscription for the defense of the Nation, and it shall be the duty of the President to propose and of Congress to enact the legislation necessary to give effect to this amendment.

IN ACCORDANCE with this constitutional requirement, legislation would be enacted by which at a stroke the whole Nation would be set to work to attain national victory. All possibility of personal profit would be eliminated. The hardy youth would still be subject, as now, to conscription for military service. But no longer would a fortunate class of persons employed in "essential industries" exist. The riveter in the shipyard, the munitions maker in the factory would not, as in 1917, make preposterous wages in safety, while his brother suffered and died in the trenches for a pittance. Labor would be conscripted equally with military service. But mere Labor would not be working for the ordinary soldiers' pay in order that employers and investors of capital might reap golden profits. For profits equally with service would be conscripted. Capital equally with Labor would be subject to the imperative demand of the state. The revolting theory that the state might command the lives of its youths, but that the money of the prosperous should be sacred, would be repudiated. Nor would the farmer or the miner be immune from the call to service. Food would be raised, but taken by the state at a price which would eliminate all profit; neither the digger of iron, the smelter, the puddler, nor the millionaire magnate who controlled the operation of all, should be allowed as the fruit of his labor during the continuance of the war more than what the boy in the trenches would be getting—namely, a bare livelihood. The profiteer would be eliminated. There would be no more "dollar-a-year men" serving the Nation, nor would there be, as during the last war, a horde of employees at Washington paid four or five times what the soldiers in the trenches received, nor a host of speculative hangers-on greatly enriching themselves at the expense of the Government. It is perfectly apparent, too, that if in war time those engaged in essential industries should be denied the right to make personal profit, this right should equally be denied to all other manufacturers or distributors. In brief, during the period of war, under the provisions of this constitutional amendment, the whole Nation would be militarized—or socialized, if you prefer—enrolled in one common effort for the performance of all functions engaged even in the most remote way with the national defense.

As a condition precedent to this, and to the end that agitation favoring war might be checked by removing all financial incentive to it, the Congress should enact a statute prohibiting the manufacture of arms or munitions of war by private corporations or for private profit at any time. The Government should be provided with all necessary arsenals for the production of military implements in time of peace, and would have immediate authority, and indeed be compelled, to take over in time of war all plants capable of manufacturing such products. While it is probable that the effect of the selfish influence of munition makers in stimulating a war spirit has been largely exaggerated, it nevertheless exists. Recent dispatches to The Christian Science Monitor have shown that today this influence is being exerted in South America, and constitutes a real menace to the maintenance of harmonious relations between the nations of that continent.

IT MAY be urged that this plan, however efficient it might be in deterring the United States from taking part in another war, is a project purely for the regulation of the internal activities of a single nation, is not international in its character, and therefore does not come within the scope of Mr. Bok's search for a plan which would assure worldwide peace. But it is evident in the first place that any nation which shall thoroughly equip itself to become an absolute unit industrially, commercially, financially, and as a military power, in the face of aggression, in most cases would be looked upon as invulnerable. Such a policy, proclaimed to the world, would repel any suggestion of attack by a foreign power. And more. The example set by the United States, should it enact legislation of this sort, would inevitably be followed by other nations. Indeed, the forces which would necessarily be organized for the purpose of arousing public sentiment in the United States to accomplish these ends would naturally seek at once to awaken a like agitation among the people of other nations. If there should be established in the United States an organization with some such title as "The Universal Conscription League," with the intent of compelling the enactment of legislation to remove from wartime conditions any possibility of personal profit or of individual immunity, such an organization would naturally become international. If Great Britain and the United States alone should be committed to a policy of this character, they not only would enforce upon the rest of the world a comprehension of the enormous power of nations, all the people of which should become as a unit in time of war, but they would stimulate within the body of other national communities a desire to follow their example.

IF NO man nor any group of men could profit in the slightest degree by war, and if every man—and, for that matter, in these days of equal political rights, every woman—were thoroughly cognizant that suffering and sacrifice, parallel at least to that of the soldier in the trenches, was to be theirs, the incentive to war would be, if not wholly removed, at least very greatly lessened. Does it sound impossible? Is anything impossible to the world which organized the forces of destruction and murder that brought Europe to its present plight? If the same zeal and trained intelligence now employed in planning participation in "the next war" were enlisted in the endeavor to avert it, enduring peace would be attained.

To many of us the words "prohibiting the manufacture of arms or munitions of war by private corporations or for private profit at any time" will be as a red rag to a bull, since it seems anti-weapon legislation. But Captain Nabers, himself opposed to the anti-weapon law, writes:

The article did not contemplate any arms other than those generally accepted as part of the armament of troops in time of war. I am fairly safe in asserting that the *Monitor* was not suggesting that an amendment be passed that would further curtail any of our remaining constitutional rights. The idea is that we want to chop off, at its source, one of the most prolific feeders for war—and he is most emphatically not a sportsman or a man who makes sporting weapons or weapons designed for protection of the home or person. This only hits at the manufacturer of recognized armament. Or at least takes out of his hands the "big business" and quantity production that war would give him, by taking away the right to make war material.

AT AN earlier Camp-Fire I passed on to you the suggestion for ending war advanced by ex-Vice-President Fairbanks. It was, in effect, that no nation should go to war except by the definite vote of the people themselves. It is a good plan. It could even be used in addition to the *Monitor* plan. But the *Monitor* plan is better, for it would shape the will of the people toward peace and that will would find means to express and enforce itself.

The Cooperating Council of the American Peace Award expects that its Jury of Award will have made its selection of the winning peace plan by January first, so that by the time you read this you will probably know what plan they have selected to be voted on by the people. Their plan, unfortunately, is for their own Jury to do the selecting and then merely allow the people to vote yes or no on that plan. The people are allowed no chance to choose among other plans submitted, no chance to express preference or judgment among them. The members of the Jury of Award are well chosen and command respect, but there are only seven of them. It is rather ludicrous, as well as undemocratic, illogical and inefficient, that the real voting for the best peace plan for a whole nation to adopt is done by seven individuals, and it is made even more ludicrous by the broad gesture of asking the people to "vote." If the people vote no on the one plan selected by the Jury, the whole attempt of the Peace Award comes to nothing; if the people vote yes on that one plan, it is merely the verdict of the people on one single plan and therefore an entirely inconclusive verdict of the people on the general question of which of all the plans the world is now able to submit is the best plan on the plan with best chance of adoption. And it is to be remembered that only the people as a whole can render soundly effective any plan whatever.

It is to be regretted that so splendid an idea as that of the American Peace Award should be robbed of so much of its significance and effectiveness by mishandling, but, ever mutilated as it is, it is a big step in the right direction and merits the American people's participation to the slight extent to which they are permitted to participate. Whatever the plan chosen by the seven, by all means take pains to cast your yes or no vote. At least we can thus get a definite verdict on one plan that is sure to be good even if not the best.

But, if this *Monitor* plan seems as good to you as it does to me and if a plan to the same general purpose or one that seems to you better is not the one submitted for your yes or no vote, why not write a *separate* letter to the American Peace Award, 342

Madison Avenue, New York City, stating your views briefly and concisely? Ballots are to be printed in only the "leading" newspapers of the country, which may mean a further limitation on a nation-wide and conclusive verdict, but do your best to get a ballot and send it in.

The voting, of course, may be a thing of the past by the time you read this, but such matters as arriving at a decision in a case of this kind often take longer than expected. In any case this *Monitor* plan deserves to be broadcast as much as possible.

IN CONNECTION with his complete novelette in this issue a few words from J. Allan Dunn:

Regarding the size of sharks prevalent in the Pacific and Indo-Pacific Oceans, and some of their characteristics, it may be noticed that the teeth of man-eaters are flat and triangular, contrasting with the lanceolate teeth of other varieties. *Carcharodon rondoletti*, occurring in almost all tropical and subtropical seas, is known to reach forty feet in length from captured specimens, while teeth dredged up by the *Challenger* expedition suggest the extinct species to have reached a length of ninety feet, such teeth being four inches wide at the base and five inches along the lateral margin. I had myself, until it was destroyed in the San Francisco fire, the personal weapon of a woman of the Gilberts, used for revenge of slights and jealousies. This consisted of a single shark's tooth mounted in a curving strip of wood and backed by a ring of sennit which slipped over the finger. The tooth was kept concealed in the hand until the offending man or woman was close enough for the tooth, shaped like the flinthead of a North American Indian arrow, to be plunged into the offender's belly. This tooth had a base of two and three quarters inches and a lateral of a fraction over three and a quarter.

RHINODON typicus is known to exceed a length of fifty feet and stated to reach seventy. In some localities it is known as the *chagrin*. It resembles the basking shark, has a short, broad and flat snout with the mouth and nostrils at the extremity and not placed well back, as in the popular conception of a man-eater or as with the first species described. The teeth are conical, small and extremely numerous. Like all sharks, its most convenient biting position is arrived at when it rolls on its back and drives itself powerfully and swiftly forward with its great pectorals to reach its prey.

There is no question as to native flotillas being attacked and largely destroyed by sharks. The question of sharks being man-eaters is hardly worth discussion, I think, despite that legendary story of a large amount being offered for any photograph of a man being taken by a shark. Port Royal Tom or Kingston Harbor Jamaica, had a well authenticated list of victims.

I once helped to break all records, including those of Duke Kahanamoku, in the deep entrance to Pearl Harbor lochs, near Honolulu. We had started the Hawaii Yacht Club and this was, I think, our first cruise. Anyway, most of the yachts were moored just inside the long, zigzag reef passage, off the abandoned Dillingham Salt Works—this was before the channel was straightened by the U. S. Government which had only just made Hawaii a territory. The tower on the salt work buildings, together with a notch in the mountains, made the bearings for entrance.

PRINCE CUPID—the late Prince Jonah Kalanianaole—to give him his right name, long delegate to Congress from Hawaii—was, with me, swimming leisurely ashore from the sloop *Gladys*—Commodore Hobron's flagship. We were about fifty yards from shore when Morris, secretary to the prince, yelled out, "*Malama! Malama!*"

Cupid was ahead and he *malama'd*—the word meaning take care—or beware—and I *malama'd* with him. I may not have gained on Cupid but I didn't fall behind any. And, when we gained the sand and looked back, there showed dorsal and caudal fin of Mr. Selachian, at least fourteen feet apart, which meant he was over twenty feet and well capable of taking off a leg and then completing the job. He swam leisurely, parallel to the shore, close to some of the yachts but, as hasty preparations were made to harpoon or shoot him, he sank.

Cupid had no doubts about his intention to become a man-eater. Neither would any other native of Polynesia, Melanesia or Micronesia. Neither had I. But it was the only time I was ever chased directly though, if the controversy ever came up, I have plenty of first-hand instances with which to convince the swimmer that sharks do eat living men, particularly white skinned ones, they being more noticeable than a native. Even *bonito* will tackle a swimmer and take a cutlet out of him. Once let your blood start flowing and even the practical *piranhas* of South American rivers have nothing on bonitos or sharks in the way in which they will swarm to the feast

We used sometimes to use a dead horse for bait off the prison near Honolulu—locally known as "the reef," not far from Iwilei. Then, as the sharks attacked the carcass in a ravening horde, we'd shoot them. As one got killed or incapacitated the rest would play the wolf trick of the Russian steppes and take their brother to their bellies in jigtime.

THE newly born circular reefs with their virgin lagoons are generally considered treasure troves in the way of pearl oysters, though the question of gems against shell is always a gamble due to local conditions—so much so that many South Sea diving companies or individuals employing divers claim only the shell and give all pearls to the divers themselves—usually with the option of first purchase.

The coral insects will continue to erect their ramparts as long as any water reaches them but those that are exposed at low tide will eventually lose their vitality and succumb, leaving their cells as the dead coral upon which eventually palms will grow and, in the course of time, sandy soil fosters other growths. *Tia Rau* in Polynesian dialect means "The Reef."

The particular form of seafire mentioned in the story as appearing like stars is probably formed by some form of Scopelid fishes and not by the luminous infusoriae responsible for most marine phosphorescence.—J. ALLAN DUNN.

FROM one of our writers' brigade whose name for obvious reasons is not printed, comes this bid for our sympathy and admiration for a certain postman who merits it:

> The old postman who lugs a heavy marching kit up a ten per-cent grade to my bungalow (R. F. D. box) sometimes stops for a word about anything that happens along.
>
> That day I told him he had brought me an anxiously awaited check, and he stopped for a moment. Told me his daughter had died just a day or so ago; that she had been in the University and writing fiction; that she had had notices and praise from a few sources and they were looking forward to seeing her name in print.
>
> Mind you, he had known for two years that I was in the writer's game, but he never asked for any advice, nor did he mention the family's ambition—for his girl—until she died.
>
> I'll not soon forget the old chap, toting around a load of other mens' circulars, bills, threats, praises, gossip and rewards—regardless of the load he had, himself, to carry.

DON'T any one of you cuss me if you write me between the middle of January and the latter part of March and don't get a reply. Am taking my last Summer's vacation in the form of a brief trip to South America, down one coast, across, and up the other. Other magazine business will, of course, go right along without me.—A. S. H.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Rue Chapelle de Grace 4,—Grate Kapel-straat, 4.
Canada—31—Howe Sound. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly.*
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
De Meurons St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
102—Amherst. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de France.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
175—Miranda, Oriente. Volney L. Held.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Great Britain—65—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia-Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos. Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. Wm. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. El Humo, Apartado 238.
223—Mazatlan, Sin. Paul L. Horn, Hotel de France, Apartado 102.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona.* Elmer E. McLean.
140—U. S. *Shawmut.* J. D. Montgomery.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
West Indies—199—Santo Domingo. Valentine Patman, Estate Consuelo, San Pedro de Marcoris, R. D.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the first and third issues of each month. Full list in first issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

> ***Please Note:*** **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts
30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
32. Great Britian
33—35. South America. In Three Parts
36. Central America
37, 38. Mexico. In Two Parts
39—45. Canada. In Seven Parts
46. Alaska
47. Baffinland and Greenland
48—53. Western U. S. In Six Parts
54—57. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
58—63. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
Standing Information

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

New York.

Dunno about this business of getting inside the flap with Bill Adams and Talbot Mundy. Being at present tethered high up in the Woolworth

Building, it's hard to think of anything about myself that would be interesting to a hombre on the Saskatchewan scraping clay off his boots. However, something may occur to me as I poke along.

My folks came over from the islands 103 years ago. In my early youth I absorbed a deal of Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott.

I have covered on foot many *versts* of the Indian, trapper and ranger trails along the Ottawa and in the Muskeg country between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay; gathered up a fine collection of early Indian relics, weapons and truck of various sorts, which I still have; know the woods and the voices of the Missouri from Pierre to Fort Benton, likewise a good stretch of the Yellowstone; have trekked over the Rockies and the Wasatch Range, and know a good many cañons where the air hasn't been much used by the paleface.

In British Columbia, southern California, Oregon, Utah and New Mexico, I gathered some first-hand dope on Indian history and Indian character, which helps me some to O. K. Hugh Pendexter.

In New Orleans once I met a Frenchman who knew more about Champlain's voyages and upper America hikes than I had seen anywhere in English.

When I get my cabin built at the junction of the Marias and the Missouri I'm going to take Fred Noyes, P. S. Durgin, Roger Fison and some other fellows out there to see the Great Outdoors where there is a heap of it in sight. You can see the Tetons from there, and it has the Road to Mandalay retired from first place as a highway having alluring possibilities in the way of diversion.

At the cabin we'll have a radiophone receiving outfit that will be a humdinger.—Donald McNicol.

ME, MYSELF: GENESIS TO REVELATION

Los Angeles, Calif.

Born in northern Ohio, my first remembrance is of a boat trip, by dead of night, across a lake in Minnesota to escape from hostile Sioux under the infamous Little Crow. I was not yet three, but I remember vividly my impressions; the still, numb horror of knowing the grown folks were scared, the hearing my father tell half a dozen women to "Keep those children quiet if you want to live to see the sunrise," the *lap-lap* of ripples against the boat, the bellying gray sail, the dry sobbing of a German mother whose boy was a soldier.

My next memory has to do with a black horse and a kindly Baptist minister, who held me in the buggy with his left arm and told me how his horse would kneel at command, to beg for breakfast.

After that, the tremendous and astonishing discovery that by the pull of my arms, I could stand on tiptoe and look across the table top. Then came the passing of Indians in war-paint; the coming of soldiers under Sibley, chasing those Indians; the racing of scared cattle up to our home, one steer with a chip taken out of his left horn and the end of the other pierced by a bullet, two inches from its tip.

My conscious existence began amid scenes of war and rapine. I grew up among men who had trapped, hunted, fought, all along the advancing frontier. I was bred upon patriotism and fed with tales of bravery and adventure. At nine years of age I had a gun of my own and hunted freely. With shotgun and rifle, rod and spear, I furnished the bulk of the meat ration for a family of eight, from that time until I was able to do a man's work at fifteen.

My mother wrote both prose and poetry, her productions appearing beside those of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fanny Fern and Olive Thorne. My father was a Methodist preacher, who broke down in health after he had preached some years in New Hampshire and Ohio. The doctors gave him two months to live. He told them he would fool them, left for the big hardwood belt of Minnesota, worked on a homestead claim and died in Los Angeles just thirty-five years after the doctors' verdict.

At twelve I was sure that I must some day be a writer. I began thinking out crude stories while I milked the cows. A chapter each morning and evening. I followed this plan for years, but never thought out the proper plan, the mechanics of a story.

Then the work piled up as the other boys left the farm to marry. I had to shoulder more than a man's job at fifteen, my father declaring that he had never hired a man who did as much work in the same time, as I did that year. From that time on I had no time to try writing. Working like a dray horse until I nearly collapsed.

At twenty-one I was in Minneapolis. There I began writing verses and kept it up spasmodically for ten years. Many were published in unimportant magazines. Then the problems of raising a family shut off the muse and I worked harder than ever.

I had no more time to write until, well past the half-century, I was left alone in a big house, doing my own cooking, housework, etc., and started writing evenings because of my loneliness. Seven months of evening and holiday writing and I decided I could live by writing. So, ever since January 1, 1916, I have kept at it.

My life has been a quiet, peaceful life, with a few lively spots in it, such as having to fight an angry bull with bare hands while shut in a long stable; fighting a "killer" horse in the same way; being attacked by a vicious dog of wolf size and killing him with bare hands; ducking a wildcat and having his hind legs knock my hat off as he went over the head he aimed for; having to pacify, by main strength, several ugly individuals who wished to macerate me with such implements as: A logger's ax, a revolver, a white-oak club, a steel bar, a "half ax," a four-tined stable fork; and a few other such trifles, including standing off a mob of toughs with a shotgun loaded with buckshot at the age of sixteen in defense of a friend of thirty-two, and bluffing a crowd of anarchistic "wobblies" on trouble intent, by letting my hands hover close to the butts of a pair of forty-fours, at the request of our sheriff in Los Angeles.

I have been obliged to defend myself against a professional white pugilist, who stripped 187, and finished without a mark. In the same way and with the same result I mixed it with a negro professional. Once a Barbary Coast tough undertook to lick me, using the Jefferies crouch and driving for my belly. I pivoted, got a half-Nelson on him, set my left hand on the seat of his trousers, jerked down with the right and up with my left. The B. C. T. revolved nicely and landed sitting down. The fight was all gone from his cosmos, instanter.

Aside from breaking through the ice and having to break a channel for myself, two hundred feet long, before the ice would bear my weight again; having about a dozen escapes from death when every man watching thought I was a sure goner, in the building trade; experiencing scores of minor accidents from which I emerged astonished at my luck; being told a number of times that I would be killed P. D. Q. by the speaker and up to date finding these promises all bunk; escaping from appendicitis and seven surgeons with a third of my colon on ice and my "vermifuge pendulum" in alcohol; and a few other small matters, my life has been quite uneventful. I have often sighed for adventure, but it has never come my way, unless it was adventurous to ride a bucking horse after the beast had broken my left thigh-bone half off. I was mad by then; and when the boys lifted me from the saddle, the horse was sad.

I guess that's all, except the negro with the clasp knife. I am still alive. Still wishing I could have an adventure. Guess I will go out with Ray Spears and hunt the festive cougar and the gentle bear. He says, "Let's go." So I may meet up with an adventure yet.

To me this writing game is the finest in the world. I could not be content in any other. It brings me some of the finest friendships of my life. From it I derive more pleasure than I ever experienced in any other pursuit. When Missionary Bill brought me letters from seven States and six foreign countries, I felt that these letters, from officers of the Navy and marines, enlisted gobs, readers who were citizens of six countries besides my own, were a far greater reward than any check could be. I knew then that my readers were my friends.

I treasure the memory of letters that have come to me from some who have found a certain measure of comfort from my writings, in the trenches of France, on the decks of American dreadnaughts, in the belly of a sub, amid the steamy heat of a tropic jungle. I have won a round if I have contributed aught to the comfort or entertainment of those hardy adventurers who make trails in strange places.

And when I get a letter, about every six weeks, from Bob, up in Wyoming, where he has carried out my instructions and advice, given him through "Ask Adventure" in March, 1916, I feel that answering letters of inquiry is not the least of the branches of the game.

So here is to you, Adventurers and Inquirers, friends o' mine!—E. E. Harriman.

P. S.—Just returned from an eight-day stay at Signal Hill, where I acted as watchman at an oil well in an emergency. Had to run a gang of "strippers" off in the night at the muzzle of a sixgun. They came with a truck to cart off all cables, tools, power wrenches, lubricants, etc.

One tried to argue the case with me while the rest crept round me to attack from all sides at once. I flashed the gun and gave them thirty seconds to get off the lease. They made it with twenty-two seconds to spare. If they had not, there would have been a truck for sale by the sheriff and some few jobs for the autopsy surgeon.

My orders were to drive them off, rather than shoot, but to shoot if they did not start when told to do so. I was only acting in the interval between drilling and getting a permanent watchman.

Got paid fat wages, had my typewriter along and a good room to work and sleep in, did a lot of good writing and not a thing was stolen while I was there, not even five cents' worth.

There has been a tremendous lot of stealing done there. Men have stolen as high as fifteen thousand dollars' worth of drill-pipe in one night; and we had about eight thousand dollars' worth lying on a rack, where it could be rolled on the truck by two men. The two power wrenches are worth eighty dollars apiece. Then we had about two miles of steel cable one and one-fourth inch thick.

Hasta luego, compadre.—E. E. H.

Washington, D. C.

It is a great honor that I, whose experiences fade away into insignificance compared with those of Camp-Fire who have really done so much, should be granted the privilege of making my bow among a body of such good fellows as are numbered in the ranks of the organization.

I do insist, however, that your editor has no idea of the real meaning of the words "humility" or "embarrassment," or else he would never have requested me to write about myself.

Well, here goes the damning evidence, boys! You're the judge and jury! Born in Washington, D. C., in 1892 and married to the best little girl in the world—barring none. Wanted to be a writer, tried it and succeeded in covering many sheets of scratch paper which I made many efforts to force upon as many editors—they didn't seem to be in the proper mood to fall for it. I then started to collect rejection slips from the various publications—including *Adventure*—and really, fellows, I had within a very short period acquired quite a complete collection of these little nicely printed slips of paper. Finally after a few years I did sell an article—and then another until I began to get that fatal disease *Wanderlust*.

During the years from 1914 to 1921 I have done much writing—especially on the merits and beauty of my adopted State Arizona. I've tried everything that a man may do and still keep within safe distance of keeping out of the penitentiary and the Legislature. I have wandered through every State of this great country of ours with the exception of those up in the far northeast corner; have been through southeast Alaska, punched cattle and rode line in Wyoming and Arizona, mucked in the U. V. Mine in Jerome, Arizona, signed on the West Coast boats from San Diego north to Wrangell, once as purser and several times as an A. B. Swamped in the lumber-camps of Omaha and Whitefish, Montana, and worked in the box factories of Flagstaff, Arizona.

Edited a newspaper in Arizona; been associate editor on several papers and magazines in that State and cooked over camp-fires in the Rockies; dealt faro in the "Owl," Mexicali, Mexico, just across from Calexico, and have followed other callings of a roving nature.

At present I am endeavoring to help Uncle Sam keep track of his ships in the merchant marine and am confined to Washington.

In ending I wish to say that I am glad to sit in at Camp-Fire—among a good bunch of "real" fellows—and I wish, in all good sincerity to offer the hand of good fellowship to you all. Thanks, fellows!—Harry E. Rieseberg.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Political Parties of New Zealand

THEY seem as scrambled as in sections of our own country:

Question:—"I am enclosing ten dollars in International Reply Coupons for postage to cover your answer. I want whatever information you can give me in regard to the history and political parties in power in your country today. Also how the reigning government is rated, as to success, etc. This information, to settle discussions among my associates."—E. W. Fierce, Peoria, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—If you had set out in your letter the exact proposition in dispute amongst your associates it would have been quite easy for me to answer from this neck of the woods. If only "A.A." folks would put their needs in questions! I can not possibly give you any political history unless you tell me the lines.

At the present time and for a decade we have had what in English politics is called the Conservative Party in power, under the Premiership of Mr. Wm. Massey, who was a farmer with a small holding. At the general elections held in December, 1922—New Zealand's elections are held every three years—there were three parties before the people: The Reform Party (Mr. Massey's) the old Liberal-Labor Party, which was in power for over twenty years before the Reformers defeated them, and what is called the Official Labor Party, comprising the extremists, popularly known as the Red Feds, with their leaning toward Leninism. The Lib-Labs and the Reds came back from the elections with as many wins as Mr. Massey, so that the latter is carrying on from hand to mouth—mostly winning no-confidence votes in Parliament by the votes of three Independent Liberals. This three-part system is very unsatisfactory, for the Red Feds are just as bitterly opposed to the Liberals as they are to the Reformers. And the Liberals will have nothing to do with the Reds, although the Reds and the Lib-Labs unite to vote against the Government.

I can not possibly tell you what the outcome will be, and if the above reply does not meet your case or settle your dispute, put the issues in the form of queries, and I will give it another go.

Fishing Industry of Chesapeake Bay

SOMETHING doing all the year round:

Question:—"Would you please give me some information about fishing in Chesapeake Bay and tidal water? Is there any market for fish down there?"—Dahl Jensen, Box 136, Corliss, Wis.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—Fishing is the one big industry of the Chesapeake Bay, and Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York offer ready markets for fish in quantities. Washington, Annapolis and other cities are good retail markets.

Commercial fishermen begin their season with the coming of the herring in the early Spring. Shad follow the herring.

Then come the rock or striped bass and sea trout. Croakers, hardhead, trout, bass, crappie, pike, catfish and perch are caught in the bay and rivers running into it.

Shad and herring are caught in traps or pound nets. These are enormous affairs, calling for a large outlay of money. They are also captured in drift nets, gill nets and fykes—the same equipment used to catch the smaller or less plentiful fish.

Fish are readily caught on hook and line, but the commercial fisherman depends upon his nets even when after the game fish. Crabs, eels and oysters help the fisherman out financially. The oyster fisherman on a small scale uses a pair of oyster-tongs to pick the bivalve from his resting-place. An expert tonger can gather 30 or 40 bushels in a day where oysters are plentiful.

Eels are caught in wicker eel-pots; crabs, by "trot-lines" and a hand net.

Havre-de-Grace is a good shad-fishing point. Solomon's Island for croakers and sea trout. Cambridge for oysters. Southern waters of the Potomac for pike and bass. Fishing in fact is good anywhere.

Better join forces with some native who knows the game if you intend to go into it on a large scale. Write Capt. Ned Apsley, Rock Hall, Md., mention my name and ask for further practical information. Cap has been fishing those waters for twenty-five years and knows every foot of them and the fish in them. Fine old gentleman, too.

A good motor-boat, an outfit of nets suitable to the locality, and a strong set of muscles are necessary. Better come out and work a season for one of the big commercial concerns on a salary—get a line on the game—before tackling it on your own.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Trees of Central America

KING MAHOGANY, and the assassin wild fig:

Question:—"I am interested in the business of importing tropical hardwoods into the United States.

English is the only language I speak, and I have never been into the tropics and have no knowledge of them. I am twenty-four, strong and active, with no capital, but good education and general ability.

I have a good all-around knowledge of the lumber industry as it is in the United States.

Please give me information on the following:

Kinds of lumber imported into U. S. in commercial quantities from your districts.

Whether logging is done by foreign organizations employing large capital, or by native outfits who sell through agents. If through agents, do these agents deal direct with American importers?

Logging methods.

To what extent lumbering has already been done.

How movement to coast is done.

What ocean service for bringing timber to this country is available.

Native Government export duties.

Attitude of Government toward Americans going in to exploit the forests.

Attitude of native people toward Americans.

Climate, diseases, language."—M. R. Sullivan, Tacoma, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Emerson:—You ask about lumber. One of the principal woods is mahogany, and the great future wealth of Honduras will be found in the forests where the mahogany grows. The mahogany tree is timber king of the tropics. Always growing in splendid isolation, it rears its aureate branches crown-like above the surrounding growth. The fact that the mahogany forest or even the mahogany grove is non-existent, makes for the high market value of the wood. A mahogany lumber company that is sure of two trees to the acre on the land it controls will pay dividends if properly managed; but as an indication of the risk in unexplored countries, there is an experience of one corporation which had a mahogany-cutting concession covering forty square miles, and the yield was exactly sixty trees, being three in each two square miles of territory.

Formerly the mahogany used to go to England and was then reshipped to the U. S. Now some Americans have interests in through those sections, but they don't talk about it; it seems a case of "say nothin', but saw wood." The logs are floated down the rivers when in flood, and they must be immediately put on board or the worms will get into the timber and destroy it (teredo or shipworm).

If you wish more information on mahogany, let me know, as from your letter, you seem to wish only general answers.

Honduras and Nicaragua have an almost endless variety of trees, many of which are exceedingly interesting. At the right season many trees are heavy with fruit, which falls dangerously near the man on a hike, and sometimes you will get hit on the head with hard nuts shaken from the branches by monkeys that vigorously resent your intrusion of their haunts.

The general level of the forest is intermittently overtopped by immense individual trees rising from 150 to 200 feet, with rugged and polished trunks as if they had been stripped of their bark. Lower down all the trees are laced together by vines and creepers, while still lower, shrubs, bamboo thickets, palms and tree ferns literally crowd all the space between the mossy trunks, and thus make travel, except along the trails, very difficult and dangerous. Out of this riot and tangle of underbrush and jungle growth spring brilliant flowers and ferns that reach an extraordinary growth.

Of all the Nicaraguan trees probably the wild fig is the most unusual. It begins as a huge parasitic vine and ends as one of the largest and most stately of trees, and also the greenest and shadiest. It grows up the ironwood tree as a vine and gradually by branching and by the spreading of its branches it completely envelops the trunk and the limbs and sends out limbs of its own. Every stage of the game can be seen, from where the big vine began to grow up along the still flourishing ironwood, on through to where the two look like a curious composite; the limbs and thick foliage of the fig branching out among the now thin and scanty foliage of the still living parent tree, then on to the stage in which the old ironwood is simply a dead skeleton, seen here and there through the trunk and foliage of the fig. Finally nothing remains but the fig, which grows to be a huge tree.

The lumbering is done by the natives in a primitive manner, and the product is bought by traveling agents.

Get a Rand, McNally's Pocket Map of Central America, 35c., and you can thus get acquainted with the names of locations, rivers, mountains and towns that may be referred to, as you go along in this subject.

Most of the transporting of valuable woods is done on the coasting-schooners, as at many places the water-depth is not near enough for steamers. These schooners ply between the Central American coast ports and Galveston, New Orleans and Mobile. Last report is given as $1,700,000 of woods exported from Nicaragua per annum, viz: Cedar, 50,000 feet; genizare, 131,100 feet; lignum-vitæ, 2,900 tons; mahogany, 8,888,400 feet; rosewood, 143,750 pounds, etc.

Send to Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., and ask for the latest information on export duties, woods, etc.

No license is required to explore, and it is best to be on a "hunting trip" and keep your own counsel, as there are several niggers in the woodpile if you explain your business; but these can be avoided if you find something you need and then denounce it through the regular channels of the Government. I think you will find some valuable territory southeast of Juticalpa, both fertile land and much timber.

The natives like *Americanos* provided the American does not begin giving tips lavishly, as some have done, in which case the native looks upon such people as —— fools, and secretly laughs at them.

In the mountain region—the timbered region—the climate in most parts is delightful, averaging 74 degrees the year round. Water is of the finest, and fish and game plentiful, and no hunting or fishing license required.

Diseases? There are none in the mountains, *if* no booze is used and the intestinal tract is kept clear and no two kinds of fruit are eaten within an hour of each other.

Language? Spanish, and the Indian dialects.

Mules cost you from $25 up for each one, and the deck of a mule is the only practical way to get there and back.

Sokotra

ANOTHER of the innumerable small holdings of the British Empire that are known to hardly any one outside of Downing Street:

Question:—"I shall be pleased if you will answer the following questions about the island of Sokotra in the Indian Ocean.

What are its political relations to England? Is there any trade with the outside world, and if so, in what lines?

What kind of people? Easy or hard to get along with, because of their Mohammedan religion?

What is quality of soil, and what are possibilities in agriculture?

Is there plenty of good fresh water?

Who is the present ruler, and has he any power, temporal and religious?

Is there any way of procuring land, and about what is it worth?"—URBAN F. CLINE, Amsterdam, N. Y.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Sokotra is a British protectorate, under the rule of the Sultan of Kishin, who lives at Gharria Plain or at Tamarida according to season. There is little outside trade. Arabs bring in coffee and rice and fabrics, trade for bitter aloes and *ghi* (clarified butter), which they take down for trade in Zanzibar chiefly. Thence they bring back coconuts, cotton goods and other trifling goods to trade again in Sokotra for aloes, blankets (native product), etc., for freight home to Arabia. Most trade is done by barter, though the silver rupee is current.

Bedouins inhabit the highlands and the western part; a mixed lot of Arabs, Indians, Portuguese and Africans, among others, inhabit the rest of the island; and caution is recommended in dealing with them.

There are great numbers of cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. The soil is cultivable but needs irrigation, which is difficult. The water is plentiful, and good in spots; but the wells are mostly brackish and unpleasant of taste. Some natural reservoirs gather water from the mountains, however, and this is good. Nine months of the year are wet—six *very* wet; and fever is prevalent on the plains.

I should scarcely think Sokotra an attractive prospect for a settler. You might write to the British Resident, Tamarida, Sokotra, for further information as to land and prices.

A Single-Tube Receiving-Set

THE diagram tells the story:

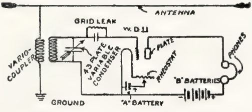
Question:—"What parts are needed to build a single-tube radio receiving-set, where the tube is run from a dry cell and B batteries?

Will you please give me the hook-up for such a set?

How far could you receive with the above outfit?

My first local receiving-set for local broadcasting consisted of phones, condenser and detector. No coil was used. My present set consists of variometer, phones, detector and 43-plate condenser. The station here at Indianapolis, Ind., is W L K. As it is not certain that they will continue broadcasting I would like to make a receiving-set for out-of-town concerts. There is a good station at Chicago, 200 miles from here. I thank you very much for listening to the S O S and hope to hear from you in the near future."—FRANKLIN JONES, Indianapolis, Ind.

Answer, by Mr. McNicol:—Inasmuch as you have a variocoupler, 43-plate condenser and pair of phones I show herewith a good circuit using a dry-cell tube with which you should be able to hear the outlying radiophone stations. You will require the following additional material:



1 WD 11 dry cell vacuum tube and socket, about $7.50.
1 dry cell, 35 cents.
1 B battery, 22½ volts, $2.
1 grid leak and condenser, $1.50.
1 rheostat, 75 cents.

If you can put up a 100-foot-long outdoor antenna about 50 feet high, No. 10 or 14 copper wire, you will get long distance. For Summer use you should use a Brach lightning arrester.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

How the Chinese Pay the Doctor

AS IN most other things, their practise is just opposite to ours; and—likewise as in other instances—there's solid horse sense back of it, too:

Question:—"I am a hospital-trained graduate nurse and am anxious to know of the opportunities for that kind of work in China, if there are any. Any information you can give will be appreciated."—ALICE HEWETT, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—Outside of the missionary societies, most of the hospitals are equipped from Europe, being usually operated by the British or other authorities. I imagine there should be quite a demand for trained nurses in the Treaty Ports such as Shanghai, Tsingstu, Amoy, Hongkong and Canton.

Of course, you understand that the Chinese are not particularly keen on Western medical science, and the hospital practise is usually confined to Europeans or Americans for the reason that the Chinese do not pay a doctor for curing them. They pay him for keeping them well. Most Chinese of means employ a doctor whom they pay by the year, but the stipend ceases as soon as the employer becomes sick and is not resumed until he is thoroughly well again.

There is, or was, quite a demand for nurses in the General Hospital in Manila. I do not know what they pay, but if you will write to the Bureau of Insular Affairs at Washington, D. C., they can probably give you full information and also the prospects of obtaining employment.

With regard to work in China, would suggest that you write to the General Hospital at Shanghai, and Hongkong, stating your qualifications and requesting the information as to employment. Also be sure that they cover the question of providing you with transportation both ways.

Chinook

A NAME common to a queer wind and a queer jargon:

Question:—"Don't know whether it's in your district or not but have just had one —— of an argument about where a 'Chinook wind' comes from and where it got the name."—L. E. HICKMAN, Kansas City, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The name Chinook wind comes from the strange *patois* or "pidgin" used between whites and Indians of the North. This queer dialect was invented by a trader of the north country, who found the Indian language hard for him and English almost impossible for the Indians. It is made up largely of English and Indian words, garbled and altered in ridiculous fashion.

Now the wind comes always from either the north or west, never from east or south. The Japan Current runs up to Alaska and curls around at its southern extremity, past the Aleutian Islands and over to the coast of Siberia. It may be responsible in part for the warm wind from the west. Where a warm wind can be born in the far north is more than I know.

Warm ocean currents are responsible for the mild climate of the west coast. The warm winds there have been traced directly to such influences. But I am not enough of an expert in hydrography to explain the exact place of birth of a warm north wind that attacks the snows of Canada. I can readily explain a hot wind coming from the east to this place, because I have traveled over the desert where it is born. But I make no stab at the north wind warm enough to clear off four feet of snow in two days.

But the wind was named by some smart Aleck who knew the Chinook jargon, as it is called, and thought that name as good as another.

You savvy Niki-tiki tenas kloochman? All right. Get out and milk the moos-ee-moos, for we need the milk for our potlatch, Boston man.

"Mika potlatch sap-a-lil, ta-tush-glees, pase-se. No muck-a-muck, no po-laly, no chickamin. Heap nasatche. Skookum Boston man! Nika clatawa ci-ya. Nika potlatch opitsa," says the old Siwash beggar.

The Flame Queen

STONES that float; stones that confer upon the wearer wisdom and invulnerability to steel—or are said to:

Question:—"Can you give me any information regarding the black opals of your country? Would like to know the prices of them in the rough. I am not a dealer but would like a few for my own personal use. Over here I find they are very expensive.

I am enclosing postage for reply."—Robert G. Alred, Spokane, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Morton:— It is impossible to state definite figures as to the value of opals. They vary widely, according to the fire and beauty of the stone. The purchaser pays as much as he thinks he can pay with any hope of profit, and the seller gets all he can. Opals, up in the Lightning Ridge region of Australia, are all dug by miners working independently or as members of small partnerships. This is the only corner of the mining-field into which the great companies have hardly yet intruded.

The most famous stone yet won at Lightning Ridge is the Flame Queen. It is oval, measuring approximately 2.8 inches by 2.3 inches. In structure and color it is unique. The center is slightly in relief, and around it the border is set like a frame. The center blazes as a vivid crimson flame and two parallel slight depressions in it give a remarkable effect of erupting craters. But it is only necessary to change slightly the angle of observation and the central field of fire is transformed to a patch of emerald, cool and exquisite, around which the border now shows as royal blue. Yet another angle, and you have a bronze center touched with points of a darker tone, the whole set about with a wavering frame of blue and amethyst. The changes of color in this remarkable stone are so strange and rapid as to give the appearance of a living organism. The opal is old, and the back of it bears the fossil impression of a plant known to scientists as Ginko, which occurs in the Jurassic rocks of Queensland, but not elsewhere in association with any opal deposit.

It is to be added that the Flame Queen has an excellent reputation for singularity. Sinister tales are told about opals, but this one has brought good fortune to everybody connected with it. You may take that story for what it is worth.

There are many varieties of opal, the varieties divided into a few main groups. The Cacholong is an opaque white or bluish-white variety named after the river Cach in Bokhara. It has the opalescent glimmer of mother-of-pearl. It is associated with chalcedony and by reason of its porous quality sticks queerly to any tongue that touches it. It is esteemed by the superstitious as the stone of friendship, sincerity and truth.

The Float Stone is porous and fibrous and floats on water. It is esteemed as a stone that sanctions pledges. Lovers join hands over this stone as it floats in a vessel of water and pledge their vows with great solemnity, it being held that misfortune will dog the footsteps of the faithless.

The Girasol, the Mexican Fire-Opal, evanescent and variable, glows of hyacinth and yellow. This is the opal of Scott's "Anne of Geierstein."

Hyalite. A transparent or glassy opal otherwise called Muller's Glass. In appearance like clear gum arabic. One of the eye-stones to which old writers attributed magic therapeutic qualities.

Hydrophane. Porous and translucent, developing opalescent tints and gradations of rare delicacy when it has been a little time in water. Otherwise of an opaque white or yellow, unattractive. Known in parts of the United States as Magic Stone.

Menilite. Found in slate near Paris. Known as Liver Opal, as it is held to have talismanic virtue in affections of that overworked organ. A concretionary opal, liver-colored.

Opal Jasper. Jasper-like, resinous, dark red, a ferruginous variety identified by the credulous as the Opal of Beautiful Wisdom.

Rose Opal. Found at Quincy, France. Exquisitely soft rose-colored stone, known as the Opal of Childhood or of the Baby Cupid.

Semi-Opal. A silicified wood-opal of waxy luster, transparent to opaque. It is found in various colors—white, brown, gray, red, blue, green. It has the appearance of petrified wood. Esteemed as a tree-growing charm or Forest Opal.

Tabasheer. A silicious aggregation found in the joints of certain bamboo known in the Malay as Mali Mali, Rotan jer Nauf (Blood of the Dragon Rattan) and Buluh Kasap (rough bamboo). Appearance of clear or slightly opaque gum arabic. Formed by the sap of the plant under evaporation. Blue under reflective light, and under transmitted light amber, red or pale yellow. The Tabasheer is extremely absorptive.

In Marco Polo's account of the expedition of the Great Khan against Chipangu, we are told that: "When the people of the Kaan had landed on the Great Island they stormed a tower belonging to some of the islanders who refused to surrender. Resistance being overcome, the Kaan's soldiers cut off the heads of all the garrison except eight. On these eight they found it impossible to inflict any wound. Now this was by virtue of certain stones which they had in their arms inserted between the skin and flesh with such skill as not to show at all externally. And the charm and virtue of the stones were such that those who wore them would never perish by steel. So when the Kaan's generals heard this they ordered that the prisoners be beaten to death with clubs. After their death the stones were extracted from their bodies and were greatly prized."

Friar Odoric says that these Stones of Invulnerability were Tabasheer specimens which were used by the natives of the Indian islands, where their virtue was esteemed. According to Avicenna the Tabasheer was a powerful eye-stone and remover of past fears, present dreads and future anxieties. But I don't guarantee any of that.

Pseudo-Morphic Opal. Opalized shells and bones are found in great quantities in the opal countries. Specimens are often unique and of curious interest. A number of shells from the new Australian fields 150 miles northwest of Tarcoola—250 miles from Port Augusta—show that silica slowly and progressively took the place of the primary substance until it was completely opalized, only the old form of the material being retained.

For these points on the various sorts of opal I am indebted to my friend Mr. Isidore Kozminsky, whose book on "The Magic and Science of Jewels and Stones" (New York, Putnam's, 1922) is rich in interest to the inquirer along side paths.

It is possible that you might get some closer estimate of the average value of relatively average opals if you wrote to Messrs. Stewart Dawson & Sons, Strand Arcade, Sydney. Good opals always command a good price in the right market, and "bargains" are to be had only when the seller is pressed for money or does not know the value of his stone. On the other hand, an inexpert buyer may easily pay more than a stone is worth.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Metals More Precious Than Gold

RADIUM of course heads the list with a value of over $2,100,000 an ounce troy, which is more than 100,000 times what gold is worth:

Question:—"Kindly give me names of metals that are of higher value than gold, and value approximately per ounce.

If this letter should appear in *Adventure* kindly omit name and address."

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—There are three commercial metals upon which I have no quotations. They are thorium, titanium, and ruthenium.

Outside the above there are about six metals mined and sold which are more valuable than gold and I shall give them in order, starting with radium at $70 per milligram; iridium, $275 an oz.; rhodium, $5 a gram; platinum, $115 an oz.; osmium, $85 an oz.; palladium, $80 an oz.

Gold is reckoned at about $20 per ounce troy.

If you will obtain the first issue of the month of the *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* magazine you will find all the latest quotations on all metals and ores. Price, 15 cents.

Life along the Saskatchewan

GOOD homestead land there, if you don't mind cold weather:

Question:—"Kindly let me have all the information you can about Saskatchewan. What are the possibilities for a man making good along the Saskatchewan River from Prince Albert? What kind of game? What guns best? Is there land that has not been visited by white men?

Or is there any other place you know of that is good and not visited very often? What is the best time of the year to go? I would like to stay if I go."—William Anwaerter, Scranton, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Hague:—There is good land available along the Saskatchewan some distance from Prince Albert, and I would advise writing the Lands Office, Prince Albert, for particulars of land available, also a copy of the Homestead Act.

Game includes moose and deer, while the principal furred animals are beaver, muskrat, skunk, mink, marten, wolf, wolverene, fox, ermine, otter, bear, lynx and in fact all the animals common to North America. I however would not advise you to try trapping as a living as you would have to go a long distance from civilization, all the areas along the traveled routes being pretty well trapped and the animals every year getting farther north. However, a man might make a little money out of it as a side line to homesteading. The open season extends over most of the Winter months, different months being open for various animals. Moose-shooting is allowed only two weeks in the year, and the game laws are very strict and the license fees high.

To find land not visited by white men you would have to go a great distance and would have one —— of a time getting there. There are many hundreds of trappers and traders through the North, some of them far from civilization.

"Keel to Truck"

HOW to get the building-plan of a clipper ship:

Question:—"I have hopes of making a model of a clipper ship about thirty-six inches long and would like to get some information as to how to shape the hull and rigging.

Have looked in the public library here and could find only pictures, and I couldn't get much from them as to the shape of the bow and stern, the arrangement of the deck-houses or the rigging.

I will appreciate anything you can send me, be it little or much."—Geo. T. Boldt, Providence, R. I.

Answer, by Mr. Rieseberg:—A book written by D. Paasch called "Keel to Truck" may possibly be found in any good-sized library and will show you just what you desire. In addition, you may try to obtain the loan from your library of a copy of the "List of Merchant Vessels of the United States" for the year 1893. The latter is obsolete but shows several views and charts of such rigging as you desire.

If you can not obtain these publications I may be able to assist you in securing plans and blueprints for such a model.

"Haunted Mines"

STORIES they tell the tourist in Colorado:

Question:—"Have you ever heard tell of the haunted mine near Pike's Peak? I would like to have its history, name of deserted town near it and other information. Has it ever been worked? If so, how long? And by whom?"—J. S. BABIN, North Adams, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—I have never heard of this "haunted mine," and I fail to find any mention of it in "History and Anecdotes of Early Days in Colorado." I am pretty well acquainted in the Cripple Creek district (distant about twenty-five miles airline from Pike's Peak) but know nothing of the mine or the deserted town.

I am afraid your credulity has been imposed upon. There are many deserted mine workings through the mining districts in Colorado that have been abandoned for various reasons, and their attendant cluster of miners' cabins, etc., gives them an appearance of desolation. Such places are often pointed out to the credulous tourist as places that have been entirely wiped out by an epidemic of some sort—"haunted diggings," etc., etc.; but there is always a logical reason for their abandonment, such as the vein being worked out, being lost or pinching but, having moved to a better location a mile or so away, where a concentrator or a stamp-mill could be erected, and many other, but none the less logical, reasons.

I know of several "spooky shafts" and tunnels, and one "spooky hotel." This was built some years ago by a stock company, its rooms being piped with running hot water from a near-by, hot spring. It was said to be haunted by the spirit of the manager's wife who had been killed there and who kept the guests awake all night. The real reasons for its desertion, however, were its inaccessibility to the public, and the building of a concentrator mill some miles above it, thus spoiling the fishing in the stream it was built on.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Origin of the Incas

WHAT means it that the buried cities of Persia belong to the same school of architecture as the Inca ruins on the Andean highlands?

Question:—"May I venture to ask a question of you that may not seem to be quite the proper sort? In extenuation I wish to state that as a South American historian I wouldn't rank as even an amateur, and as for knowledge of theology or the Bible—well, a belief in a Supreme Being and the Golden Rule is all the religion I've ever taken seriously. So I ask you to believe that I ask through a sense of curisoity and a desire to know the opinion of some one better informed than myself.

A few months ago I read Fernando Montesinos' theory of the origin of the ancient Peruvian civilization. He at least gives a more plausible beginning to his theory than the fairy-tales of Manco-Capac. Briefly, as you no doubt know, he claims the Peruvian nation was originated by a people led by four brothers who settled in the Valley of Cuyco. It struck my mind, then, that he was far ahead of the other historians of his time.

Two weeks ago on a Boston-Providencet rain I found a book in one of the seats, glanced through it, got interested, took it home and read it, then tardily looked for the owner's name and mailed it to him. The book was 'The Book of Mormon.' Three things about that book have kept me wondering; first, the way that it coincides with Montesinos' theory of the people led by four brothers; second, the similarity of the names of the cities mentioned with the names of the South American ruins as given by Prof. John D. Baldwin, and also its recording of two previous migrations before that of the four brothers which matches up with modern estimates of the antiquity of the ruins remaining today; third, the ingenious way the book is written and phrased.

Frankly I thought the book might have been stolen from Montesinos' with additions by its author; but Baldwin in his book about fifty years later bolsters the plausibility of its story, although he claims a migration from the regions of the Mound Builders to South America, while the 'Book of Mormon' just reverses and has the people spread northward through Central to North America.

Now here is my question, and then I'll lay off this windy epistle 'fore I bore you to death. Leaving the religious question of the Book of Mormon entirely out, what do you think of the possibility of its story hitting anywhere near the mark as being a history of the ancient Americans?

As I said before, Mr. Young, if you think I tread in forbidden territory just chuck the letter; but as for my being either pro or anti-Mormon, I doubt sometimes whether I am even half a Christian."—LLOYD A. B. SHEEHAN, Providence, R. I.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Several years ago I decided to go to the bottom of the Inca-origin matter. I dug and dug. The more I dug the more I found to dig. I went back, back, back and after getting back four thousand years I found I was up against the same old "*quien sabe?*" I started with. To be more explicit, a lengthy search will get a man back to the general puzzle that all men strike when tracing any race.

There are connections that link them with Asia, back through the ancient Persian stock to the daddy stock of the Hindu—the Iranian. The buried cities of Persia are of the same architecture as the Inca ruins of the highlands of the Andes; but that doesn't get a man anywhere, for the Iranian stock traces back into ancient Egypt and the Mesopotamian basin, and you will trace branches in several directions from there.

Some explain it on the supposition that these races destroyed their cities or deserted them after so long a cycle, and some say they built cemeteries for the dead that were never inhabited by the living. This appears to be the case of some of the ruined cities of Bolivia and Persia. Prof. Bingham read some old Inca dope and went to Peru and actually found a deserted city high in the Andes which was the one he had read of.

I have also noted various things in the "Book of Mormon" that bear on both ancient Persian, Inca and Aztec history and also on the Maya. At about the time Smith was having his vision there was a lot of investigation going on concerning the Inca and Aztec mystery as well as the Maya; and Smith, being of a clairvoyant turn of mind, might have picked up some of this telepathically in his dreams. There is a lot of mystery as to just where he did get his material, and telepathy may possibly explain it, at least in part. Men of the nervous temperament such as he had often can puncture the veil at times and get into the realm of the supernatural.

There is much investigation along these lines being made at present by various scientific bodies. One of the best books on the subject is "From the Unconscious to the Conscious" by Prof. Geley and published by Harper & Bros. of New York.

What I am meaning to say is that one can trace the Incas back to the general human stock of some four thousand or five thousand years ago, and they are one of the branches. Every danged other branch is a mystery also when you get back far enough. The Aztecs, Toltecs, Mayas, can all be traced back to the dawn of history; but that ends it, and a man can only surmise behind that date.

Did you ever read of Baalbek? This is one link of Peru with India. Easter Island is another. There is a sort of gap that may be accounted for by the sinking of some islands when the Andes grew higher.

Hiram Bingham of Yale College can possibly tell you more on the subject than any other man in the U. S., if he happens to be in the country.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

Editor's Note:—As it was necessary to put this issue to press before Mr. Gordon's manuscript was received, it is impossible to publish more than the above regular announcement describing the nature of the "Old Songs" section.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FEBRUARY 29TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE CABIN WINDOW ***William Byron Mowery***
Bent Avery tells a story.

THE TREASURE OF BOO HOO ***Frederick Moore***
"It was one or forty million dollars—I forget which."

PORTO BELLO GOLD A Five-Part Story Part III ***Arthur D. Howden Smith***
Sailing with *Long John Silver* and *Captain Flint* to "Treasure Island."

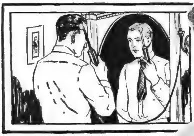
THE SNOW TRAIL ***F. St. Mars***
Anything that stopped the pine-marten would have to stop him *dead.*

THE LORD OF ST. LO ***H. C. Bailey***
A castle, besieged—inside and out.

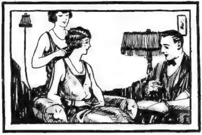
ON THE STAGE ROAD ***Charles E. Barnes***
Little men, big men, guns and fire.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Leonard H. Nason, W. C. Tuttle, Frederick J. Jackson, Arthur O. Friel, Gordon Young, L. Patrick Greene, Kingsley Moses, Arthur D. Howden Smith, George Brydges Rodney, J. D. Newsom and Barry Scobee; and short stories by F. St. Mars, Raymond S. Spears, Sidney Herschel Small, John Webb, Michael J. Phillips, J. Allan Dunn, John T. Rowland, Royce Brier, Georges Surdez and others; stories of the Amazon, the West, the South Seas, the War, Japan, the Spanish Main, Africa, the sea, the desert, the jungle, cowboys, sailors, soldiers, pirates and pioneers—of adventurers the world around.



Used by famous specialists in hair and skin treatments for men. Just a few minutes daily results in crisp, healthy hair and glowing skin. Gives men that healthy outdoor color and clear complexion.



May be used any time, anywhere. Soothes the nerves, relieves pain and imparts sparkling, healthy beauty that is permanent; it is Nature's own way. Beautifies the human skin like dew refreshes flowers. Use it at home.

An Amazing Discovery that improves Health, Beauty, Vitality—

THIS most amazing discovery of scientists, now bringing health, happiness and beauty into the lives of thousands. It is Nature's own way—dependable, harmless and pleasing. Results are certain and speedy. Purifies the blood and builds circulation. Endorsed by leading beauty specialists, doctors and plain folks.

For Men and Women

Brings new rays of sunshine into the household.

Used by every member to relieve pain, build strength, vitality and beautify with the permanent natural health that makes men and women magnetically fascinating, attractive.

Acts Instantly—No Delays

You immediately feel and see results from this marvelous scientific device. No long waiting, no tedious delays. It puts roses in your cheeks and sparkle in your eyes. Gives crisp healthy lustre to hair and creates "pep" and vigor from the very first use.

This device generates Violet Rays which are pleasantly soothing and quickly calm and quiet the nerves. Creates Ozone which destroys disease and germs—it purifies the blood and stimulates circulation. This is truly a boon and blessing to all who seek magnetic, vital health and permanent beauty.

Now these Scientific Health Giving Treatments—can be enjoyed at Home

Until recently folks were compelled to go to doctors and beauty specialists to secure the benefit of the wonderful scientific treatments. This cost considerable money, was often embarrassing and consumed much time. Now you can enjoy these marvelous treatments, in comfort, any time you like, in the privacy of your home. Every member of the family may enjoy its use, whether for health or beauty culture.

10 Days' Free Trial

For a limited time only we offer readers of this magazine the opportunity to use this marvelous, scientific device freely at home for ten days and enjoy its wonderful results without cost or obligation. We have found that to sell one is to sell many in every neighborhood, hence, this unusual free introductory trial offer. Mail the coupon at once—don't delay too long or the offer will be withdrawn.

Violet Rays

Send for—Free Book

We have a *limited supply* of this complete treatise on Health and Beauty culture for Free distribution. Do not fail to secure this valuable free book. Reveals marvelous scientific methods. Explains how Nikola Tesla discovered Violet Rays, how it works, why it heals. Tells what doctors and plain folks accomplish in conquering pain, disease and nervous troubles. Shows charts of the human body, explains where pains start, how to banish them. This 50-cent book now offered FREE for a limited time only to all those who mail coupon.

MAIL COUPON for TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOK

Earn Cash

Men and women, without experience, earn liberal profits in spare time showing Violet Rays to neighbors. Proves results first demonstration. Sells on sight. Get attractive offer and wholesale prices now

$1.00 Delivers to Your Home

VIOLET RAY Outfit Complete

This marvelous scientific device will be delivered for 10 days' free trial in your home, you to be the sole judge of its wonderful value. No strings, no obligation; if it does not do all we claim, return it at our expense and that is all. Just mail the coupon now.

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326 West Madison St., Dept. 802, Chicago

SEND NO CASH

FREE TRIAL COUPON

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Please send me without any cost or obligation your free book describing your VI-REX Violet Ray Outfits, and details of your FREE trial offer.

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Address..

City.............................. State.................

Accused of Murdering His Wife!

The great criminal lawyer fights and wins his own case. Is he really innocent? Or is it his skill as a clever lawyer that sways the jury? With most of the world believing him guilty of the ugly tragedy at Crisomby Lake, where his wife mysteriously disappeared, her body being found later at the bottom of the lake—how can *Dascome* start life anew? Why does he watch every move of *Mary Bliss,* the frightened half-witted woman, with a dreadful scar on her face?

Every one will enjoy reading this mystery novel, "The Double House," by Elizabeth Dejeans, appearing in *Everybody's Magazine* now.

Be sure to buy the February issue of

Everybody's
Magazine

FIRST IN FICTION • ON EVERY NEWS-STAN

Eight thousand miles saved on every trip

It used to be 13,307 miles from New York to San Francisco by sea; it is now only 5,262.

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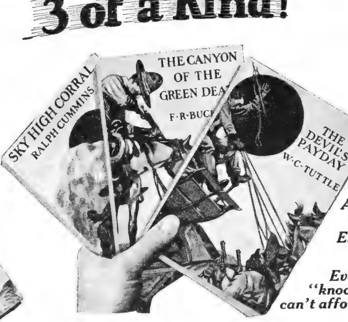

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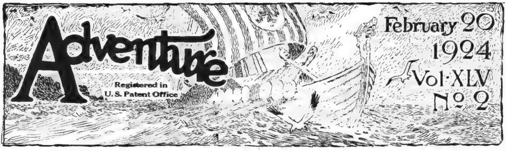

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Contents for February 20th, 1924, Issue

Three Lights From a Match *A Complete Novelette* . . . . Leonard H. Nason 1
War—a doughboy dodges a jinx.

Slants on Life *As You Please* . . . . Bill Adams 42

For the Honor of the Cloth *An Off-the-Trail Story** . . . Patterson James 45
City—funeral of the "*Apple-Sauce King.*"

A Pathfinder Without Fame *An Article* . . . . . Michael J. Phillips 56
1846—with Frémont in California.

The Best Defense . . . . John Webb 66
Haiti—"*One-Two Mac*" takes a man in hand.

Cassiar Gold *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . Wilbur Watkins 76
The Yukon—gold which was blood-stained.

Porto Bello Gold *A Five-Part Story Part II* . . . . . Arthur D. Howden Smith 90
The sea—we take ship with *Pew* and *Long John Silver.*

Kit Carson's Two Wedding Days . . . . . . Josiah M. Ward 121

"The President" . . . . John Eyton 124
India—the mahsir fish.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(*Continued on next page*)

(Continued from preceding page)

Down Dim Passages . . . . **Sidney Herschel Small** 127
Japan—the surgeon of Yokogi.

The Gila Kid . . . . **E. S. Pladwell** 141
The desert—the thirst terror.

Rivals of the Reef ***A Complete Novelette*** . . . . . **J. Allan Dunn** 149
South Seas—a king shark—fifty feet long!

The North Road *Poem* . . . . **Laurence Edward Innes** 174

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 175

Camp-Fire Stations 181

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 182

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 182

Ask Adventure 183
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Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Will Crawford**

Cover Design . . . . **H. C. Murphy**

Three Complete Novelettes

AROUND the Horn on a clipper ship; and at last "ship and sailor, *Jonah* and *Big Alec*, *Macranald* and the boys, *Dutchman* and *Finn*, the crazed sea-apprentice and the coal-eyed *Old Man*, the quiet mate beside him, came in once more to port—to 'the long night in'—a night of sleep with no disturbance from the elements, with no bells to harken to or salty ropes to haul upon or sails to furl." "LIVERPOOL TO VANCOUVER," a novelette of the sea by Bill Adams in the next issue.

NO FISH ever brought up in the nets with which *Quoipa-Moiru* dragged Lake Titicaca were stranger than the three *scientificos* who landed one day at the little Peruvian island and began to dig among the sacred ruins. *Quoipa-Moiru*, knowing that such things were *huaca* and therefore dangerous, sought the help of *Mamu* the soothsayer in averting the evil which these strangers would surely bring to the site of the Inca temple. So a talisman was given, and *Quoipa-Moiru* obeyed certain instructions, and an ancient magic began its work. "THE FISH-NETS OF QUOIPA-MOIRU" is a complete novelette by Gordon MacCreagh in our next issue.

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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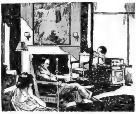

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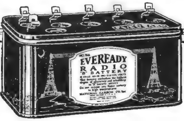

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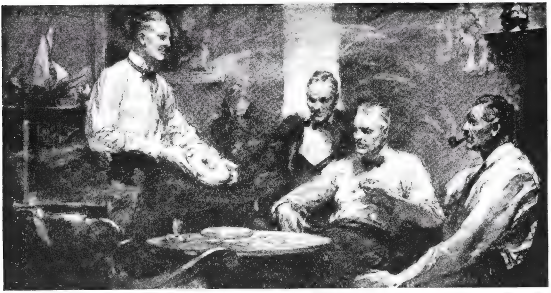

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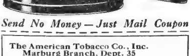

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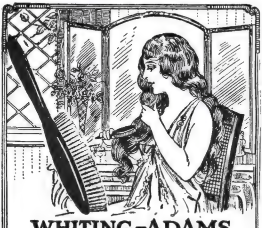

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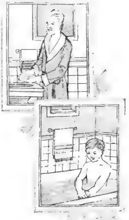

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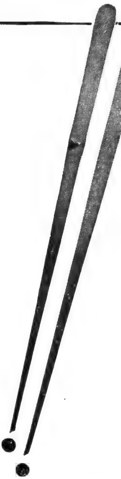

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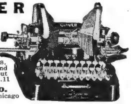

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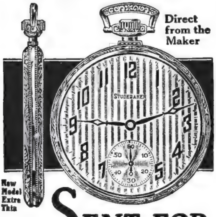

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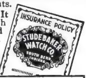

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Charcoal is a remedy that the more you take of it the better; it is not a drug at all, but simply absorbs the gases and impurities always present in the stomach and intestines and carries them out of the system.

Charcoal sweetens the breath after smoking, and after eating onions and other odorous vegetables.

Charcoal effectually clears and improves the complexion, it whitens the teeth and further acts as a natural and eminently safe cathartic.

It absorbs the injurious gases which collect in the stomach and bowels; it disinfects the mouth and throat from the poison of catarrh.

All druggists sell charcoal in one form or another, but probably the best charcoal and the most for the money is in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges; they are composed of the finest quality Willow charcoal powdered to extreme fineness, then compressed in tablet form or rather in the form of large, pleasant tasting lozenges, the charcoal being sweetened to be smooth and palatable.

The daily use of these lozenges will soon tell in a much improved condition of the general health, better complexion, sweeter breath and purer blood, and the beauty of it is that no possible harm can result from their continued use, but on the contrary, great benefit.

Many physicians advise Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges to patients suffering from gas in stomach and bowels, and to clear the complexion and purify the breath, mouth and throat. They are also believed to greatly benefit the liver. These lozenges cost but thirty cents a box at drug stores. For a free trial send your name and address to F. A. Stuart Co., 1 Stuart Bldg., Marshall, Mich. You get more and better charcoal in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges than in any of the ordinary charcoal tablets.

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Here is your chance to get in the swim—to learn to play the most fascinating of all instruments, the Hawaiian Guitar, **just as the Hawaiians do,** and in an amazingly short time

Our method is so simple, plain and easy that you begin a piece your first lesson. In half an hour you can play it! Thousands of successful students prove this to be true. It is quite astonishing to find the ease with which you can master the Hawaiian Guitar—no matter how little your knowledge of music may be you can positively learn to play by our plain and easy method.

Expert Hawaiians Teach You to Quickly Master Their Secrets of This Fascinating Music

The instructions you receive from such world **famous experts** as Lawrence Kalaluki, Walter Kolomoku, Frank Ferrer, Carl Seville and others are invaluable. **No other** Conservatory can **even begin** to give you the expert teaching and knowledge you gain through us. And remember, while it is conceded that the Hawaiian Guitar produces the sweetest music, yet its mastery by **you** will be simple and quick, since there are

ONLY 4 EASY MOTIONS

to learn to be able to play **any** music—popular, dance, classical, native Hawaiian airs, or old time melodies and hymns. Just think of it! **You need never have read a musical note** in your life! For that matter, even though you haven't the slightest knowledge of **any** musical instrument **we guarantee to teach you how to play** just like the Hawaiians!

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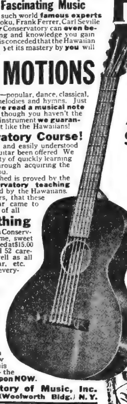

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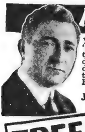

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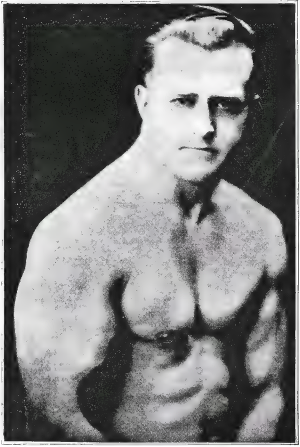

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I am not a medical doctor. I don't claim to cure disease. Neither do I put any self-assumed title of Professor before my name. *I am a builder of muscle*—internal as well as external. I claim and can prove that by proper exercise you can even build muscle in and around your heart and every vital organ. The kind that shoots a thrill through your veins and reaches every crevice of your body. I add years to your life, and oh boy! what a kick you get out of every day you live. And talk about big, brawny arms and legs, or broad backs and husky chests—just take a look through this winter's copies of Physical Culture Magazine and see for yourself. You will see a few pictures of my pupils there—living examples of the Earle Liederman system—doctors, lawyers, business men, but every last one of them good enough to pose as a professional strong man. Some are in better shape than men who are now acting as instructors to others.

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What are you going to do about it? Don't sit idle and wish for strength. That will never bring it. Come on and get busy. You must have it, and I'm going to give it to you. I don't promise it, I guarantee it. You don't take any chance with me, so come on and make me prove it.

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"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing, and it is yours to keep This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

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She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

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Thousands have found that the *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

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For 16 of his 17 years, Edward Bolian's foot was badly deformed as a result of Infantile Paralysis. His letter and photos show what was done for him at McLain Sanitarium in 5 months.

I wish to express my thanks for the great benefit that I received at your Sanitarium. I walked on the side of my foot for 16 years, and after 5 months' treatment, I am now walking flat on my foot and as good as anyone.

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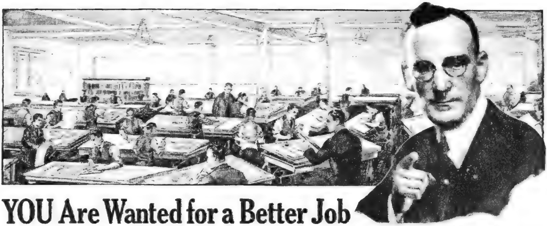

YOU Are Wanted for a Better Job

That was the good news they brought him just a few short months ago. Then he held an ordinary job working long and hard on small pay. **Today** he is a high-salaried Draftsman earning nearly $100 a week How did it happen? It isn't a long story because it's all so simple, so easy You can do just what he has done if you'll start by reading every word—clear down to the coupon that marks your way to better pay.

It all started one evening while he was sitting at home—reading. He saw the advertisement of the COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING and he knew it was his opportunity to earn from $50 to $100 a week, in an uncrowded field with a big, sure future. He sent in the coupon. Later he enrolled for the COLUMBIA course Today he's making **real** money. His brain is working as well as his hands. He's standing on the threshold of a brilliant future with all that it means—independence—money—success—happiness.

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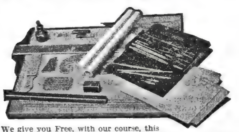

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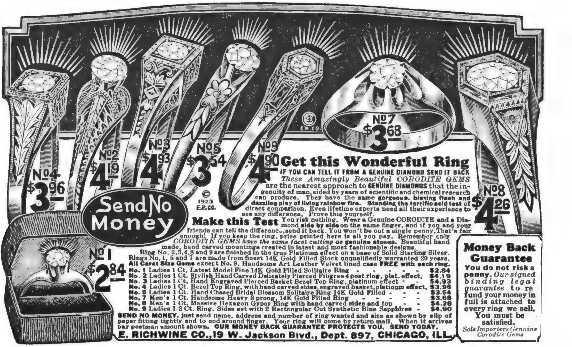

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These Amazingly Beautiful CORODITE GEMS are the nearest approach to **GENUINE DIAMONDS** that the ingenuity of man, aided by years of scientific and chemical research can produce. They have the same **gorgeous, blazing flash and dazzling play of living rainbow fire. Standing the terrific acid test of** direct comparison. Even lifetime experts need all their experience to see any difference. Prove this yourself.

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$20 Fine Tone Musical Instruments

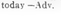
We have a wonderful new copyrighted system of teaching note music by mail! To first pupils in each locality we will give free a $20 superb Violin, Tenor Banjo, Ukulele, Hawaiian-Guitar, Banjo, Mandolin, Banjo-Ukulele, Banjo-Mandolin, Cornet or Banjo-Guitar absolutely free. Also teach Piano and Organ. Very small charge for lessons only. Four lessons will teach you several pieces. Over 100,000 successful players. We guarantee success or no charge. Complete outfit free. Write today, Dept. 140. No obligation.

Slingerland School of Music, 1815 Orchard St., Chicago, Ill.

21 Jewel Burlington

Used on nearly every vessel in the U.S. Navy. 21 Ruby and Sapphire jewels. 25 Year Gold Strata case. Only $1 down! Send for beautiful free book. Do it Today.

$1 Down



Burlington Watch Company, Dept. 14-62
19th St. and Marshall Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

THROAT IRRITATIONS

Throat irritations quickly disappear when you take Brown's Bronchial Troches. A dependable remedy —not a candy. Used for more than 70 years by singers and public speakers. Promptly relieves hoarseness, loss of voice, coughing. At all druggists.

JOHN I. BROWN & SON, BOSTON, MASS.
General Sales Agents: HAROLD F. RITCHIE & CO., Inc.
New York London Toronto

BROWN'S Bronchial TROCHES
COUGH AND VOICE LOZENGES
IN 3 SIZE PACKAGES

NEW SIMPLE METHOD

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

You can make 15 to 50 Dollars a week at Hor IN YOUR SPARE TIME. Easily learned our New Simple Method. NO CANVASSIN EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. We te: you how, GUARANTEE you WORK and pay you cash no matter wh you live. Write today for FREE sample lesson and Illustrated Booklet.

UNITED SHOW CARD STUDIOS, 211 Dinan Bldg., Detroit, Mi

Ford Runs 57 Miles o: Gallon of Gasoline

A new automatic and self-regulating device has been invent by John A. Stransky, 2054 Fourth St., Pukwana, South Dako with which automobiles have made from 40 to 57 miles oı gallon of gasoline. It removes all carbon and prevents spa plug trouble and overheating. It can be installed by anyo in five minutes. Mr. Stransky wants agents and is willing send a sample at his own risk. Write him today —Adv.

Would You Like to Earn from $30 to $40 a Day

Then read how J. R. Head of Kansas made $69.50 for one day's work and now enjoys a steady income of $5,000 a year

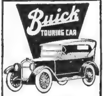
J. R. Head

W. S. Cooper

of Ohio, finds it easy to earn over $500 a month selling Comer All-Weather Coats.

E. A. Sweet

an electrical engineer, is making $600 to $1,200 a month and works only about four hours a day.



FREE

I am now offering my representatives a Buick Touring Car as an extra reward in addition to all other profits. If you write at once you will be given the same opportunity.

"I AM going to tell you some startling facts about myself in the hope that others may profit by my experience.

Just eighteen months ago I was facing an economic and financial crisis. I was sick, broke and hopelessly discouraged. The future held nothing for me.

Today, just a year and a half later, I am one of the most successful men in this community. I am the owner of a prosperous, growing business. My income is more than $400 a month.

You will be surprised when I tell you how easy it has been for me to turn from failure to success.

The Curse of a Small Income

Remember that eighteen months ago I had almost nothing. Every dollar I earned was used immediately for food, clothes and rent. Not a dollar saved—in constant fear that I would lose my job—that was my predicament.

I wanted to live as well as my neighbors. I wanted an automobile. I wanted to give my children an education. I wanted to give my wife the things that every woman is entitled to. But I couldn't. I barely made both ends meet.

Then came a serious illness. I lost my job. Even my small income was gone. I was desperate.

My Big Opportunity Comes

When things seemed blackest my big opportunity came. Within a week I had made a net profit of $67.66. Within thirty days I had $170. The next month I made $280—and from then on my income has jumped steadily. I have made $133 in a single week, and one day I made $69.50 clear profit for myself.

This is how the wonderful change came about. One day my son brought home a magazine, and in it there was an advertisement that said that any man, without experience or training, could make from $100 to $300 a month in his spare time.

I could hardly believe it. I knew that I had never made that much by working ten hours a day. I felt sure that such earnings were impossible. And yet I read where others had made as much as $1,200 a month in this same work. The advertiser offered to send a book without cost. I had everything to gain and nothing to lose, so I mailed the coupon.

Amazing Book Showed Me the Way to Success

That marked the turning point for me. The little book told me exactly what to do—where to go, what to say, and how to make money. If I hadn't sent for it when I did I don't know what might have happened. All I have today—my prosperity, my business—are due to the things I learned by reading that book.

And there is no secret to my wonderful success. I am just an average man. What I have done others can do as well and as easily.

My work has been easy and pleasant. I am the representative for The Comer Manufacturing Company in this territory. All I do is take orders for their coats. They gave me a wonderful proposition. They furnished me with such complete help that I succeeded immediately.

Chance for Average Man to Make $5,000 a Year

The Comer Manufacturing Company is the largest concern of its kind in the world. They manufacture a splendid line of raincoats for men, women and children. These coats are not sold in stores. They are sold by local representatives like myself.

Because of the marvelous styles, excellent material and superb workmanship; because of the wonderfully low prices for such high grade merchandise, it is very easy to take orders for these coats. The representative does not collect or deliver. And most pleasing, **he gets his money the day he takes an order.**

I am not a salesman in any sense of the word. I'm just an average man. My territory is not good, yet there has never been a single day that I haven't made money—generally from $20 to $40. My business is growing bigger each day. I get repeat orders. My customers send their friends to me. I expect my profits to be at least $5,000 this year.'

You Are Offered This Same Wonderful Opportunity

This is the true story of J. R. Head of Kansas, who lives in a small town of 631 population. It shows the money you can earn as a Comer Representative. If you want to make from $100 to $200 a week, if you want to make more money in your spare time than you have ever made in your life—then fill in the coupon below and mail it to The Comer Manufacturing Company.

They will send you a copy of the booklet that was worth thousands of dollars to Mr. Head. They will tell you how, without investment, experience or training, you can control a business of your own and make from $30 to $40 a day. Sign the coupon and mail it at once.

THE COMER MFG. CO.
Dept. BC-67 **Dayton, Ohio**

Just Mail This NOW!

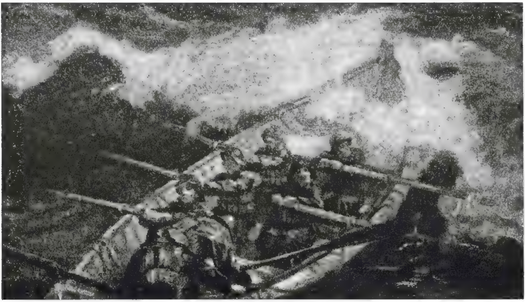
THE COMER MANUFACTURING CO.,
Dept. BC-67, Dayton, Ohio.

Please send me, without obligation or cost on my part, copy of your eight-page booklet and full details of your proposition. Tell me how I can make from $30 to $40 a day.

Name..

Address.......... ....

Print or write plainly



Back to the Burning Ship for a Dog—

Will they risk it?

These famous authors—
E. Phillips Oppenheim
Elizabeth Dejeans
—have novels appearing in EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE for February

THE cook — always the coward of the ship—was brave enough to go down the galley for the dog. Will the hard-headed crew risk their lives and return to the burning ship, with the flames creeping closer and closer to the cargo of explosives! This dramatic story of the sea by Albert Richard Wetjen, the well-known writer, is one of the many feature stories in

1st in fiction

On sale at every news-stand

February

Everybody's Magazine

!
ashamed

It brought him untold misery; yet only he, himself, was to blame.

HE had neglected his teeth so long that he was actually ashamed to visit his dentist. And like so many people, he kept putting it off.

Finally he became so sensitive about their appearance that in conversation he habitually distorted his mouth in an effort to hide them from view.

A reasonable effort on his own part—consulting his dentist, conscientious use of his tooth brush and the right dentifrice—might have saved him this humiliation. But he even neglected these things. He was uncomfortable wherever he went.

Only the right dentifrice—consistently used—will protect you against such criticism. Listerine Tooth Paste cleans teeth a new way. The first tube you buy will prove this to you.

You will notice the improvement even in the first few days. And, moreover, just as Listerine is the safe antiseptic, so Listerine Tooth Paste is the safe dentifrice. It cleans yet it cannot injure the enamel.

What are your teeth saying about you today?—*LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., Saint Louis, U. S. A.*

LISTERINE TOOTH PASTE

$3 DOWN Brings you a Genuine UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITER

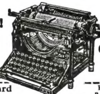
10 DAYS FREE TRIAL Your $3.00 unconditionally returned if at end of 10 days you are not satisfied with this late model UNDERWOOD typewriter rebuilt by the famous Shipman Ward process.

GREAT PRICE SAVING Direct to you from the largest typewriter factory in the world by our money saving methods.

EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS So small that you will not notice it while you enjoy the use of this wonderful machine.

FREE BOOK OF FACTS Explaining Shipman Ward's wonderful system of rebuilding typewriters and also valuable information about the typewriter industry both instructive and entertaining.

Act Today! Mail Coupon



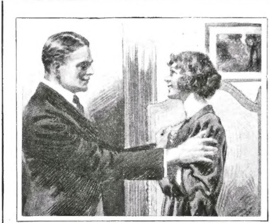
5 Year Guarantee

Shipman Ward Mfg. Company
3052 Shipman Building
Montrose & Ravenswood
Aves., Chicago

Please send me a copy of your free book of facts, explaining bargain offer.

Name..
St. and No....................................
City..........................State.............

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every Owner Buys Gold Initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. **AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 85, East Orange, N. J.**



"Mary, I Owe It All to You"

"MR. WILLIAMS called me into his office today and told me he was going to raise m salary $50 a month.

"'I am glad to give you this opportunity,' h said, 'for the best reason in the world. Yo deserve it.

"'You may not know it, but I've been watching your work ever since the International Cor respondence Schools wrote me that you ha enrolled for a course of home study. Keep i up, young man, and you'll go far. I wish w had more men like you.'

"And to think, Mary, I owe it all to you! might still be drudging along in the same ol job at the same old salary if you hadn't urge me to send in that I. C. S. coupon!"

How about you? Are you always going to work for a sma salary? Are you going to waste your natural ability all yo life? Or are you going to get ahead in a big way? It a depends on what you do with your spare time.

More than 180,000 men are getting ready for promotion rig now in the I. C. S. way. Let us tell you what we are doing f them and what we can do for you.

Mail the Coupon To-day

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2030-D, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify f the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Spanish ☐ French

☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

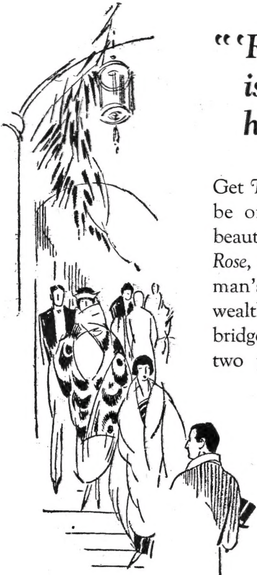
☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Metallurgy
☐ Steam Engineering
☐ Radio

☐ Architect
☐ Blue Print Reading
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

Name..
Street 8-3-23
Address...
City..............................State...........................
Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the Intern tional Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canad

KATHLEEN NORRIS says—



"'Rose of the World' is the best serial I have ever written."

Get *The Delineator* for February and be one of the first to read this beautiful love-story—the story of *Rose*, a poor girl, and *Jack*, the rich man's son. Is the gap between wealth and poverty too great to be bridged? Is love enough to make two people happy? Can people truly be happy without love? These are the problems of this great novel, "Rose of the World."

Be sure to buy

20 cents a copy
On every news-stand

The DELINEATOR

$2.00 a year—the price you would have to pay for this novel alone!

THE DELINEATOR IS FIRST WITH THE FOREMOST FAMILIES

DeLuxe DIAMOND BOOK FREE!

Sweet's
Diamond
Book
L. W. S
INC

3000

Exceptional Values in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry.

The most complete and beautiful book of its kind—YOURS FREE! 96 colored pages full of wonderful bargains—gifts for every occasion. Buy on our

Friendly Credit Terms

You have 10 WHOLE MONTHS to PAY on anything you select. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. No Red Tape. Every transaction strictly confidential.

Soli-taires *from* **$25** *to* **$1000**

Limited Supply

Write for *your* copy TODAY—to Dept. 304G

Dept. 304G "THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"
AUTHORIZED CAPITAL $1,000,000.

L·W·SWEET INC.
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

RADIO
BIG MONEY IN A BIG FIELD

Be a RADIO EXPERT. Make big money. Win success in this new uncrowded field. Trained men needed. Learn quickly, at home in spare time, to construct, install, operate, repair, maintain and sell radio equipment.

RADIO EXPERTS EARN $3,000 TO $10,000 a Year

Radio Facts

Short course, low cost, easy terms, money back guarantee.

FREE Wonderful tube receiving set of latest design. Range of over 1000 miles. Write today for "RADIO FACTS."

A. G. Mohaupt, Radio Eng. **American Radio Association**
4513 Ravenswood Ave., Dept. H-2, Chicago

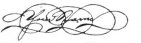
SENSATIONAL SALE

GUARANTEED TYPEWRITERS

L C Smith & Bros

Limited quantity fully guaranteed standard make Typewriters. **5 Days Free Trial.** Lowest prices ever offered. Some at $45.35. Easy payments as low as $3 monthly. Send today for **FREE booklet** of Valuable Typewriter Information and Special Sale Bulletin.

SMITH TYPEWRITER SALES CO.
266-360 E. Grand Ave. Chicago, Ill.



YOUR NAME
Artistically written on cards, 25c a doz., 3 for 50c.
Hansen, 612 Chauncey St., Eau Claire, Wis.

Lack of Training Cost This Man $47,424!

For forty years Sherman C. Wood, of Baltimore, Md., had been averaging less than $24 a week, with the exception of two years when he was acting as foreman of a department.

Forty years is a long time to wait—but he saw, thru the failings of others, what would happen to him unless he found a way to train for larger responsibilities.

Wood took up home-study training under the LaSalle Problem Method, and within a period of ten months—and by "devoting only about four or five hours a week" to his studies—he was promoted from foreman to the position of factory superintendent, *and his salary was practically doubled.*

He writes: "I can truthfully say to younger men that if they would only profit by the experience of others they can gain more knowledge thru one year's training by LaSalle methods than can be obtained in ten years' practical experience on the job by hard work."

Mail the Coupon—Save the Money!

Better late than never—but—do you realize what that delay cost Sherman C. Wood and those who were near and dear to him?

For one thousand, nine hundred and seventy-six weeks he paid *at least $24 a week for the doubtful privilege of staying in the ranks of untrained men.* His neglect of this one main avenue of business progress cost him—leaving simple and compound interest out of the reckoning—the appalling sum of $47,424—a fortune in itself!

* * * *

How much are YOU paying for your membership in the Regretful Order of the Untrained?

Below this text there's a coupon. It will bring you just the information you should have—it will place before you opportunities that for thousands and thousands of men have spelt SUCCESS.

Fill it in, clip it, and place it in the mail today.

LaSalle Extension University
The Largest Business Training Institution in the World
Dept. 2367-R **Chicago, Illinois**

Please send me catalog and full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

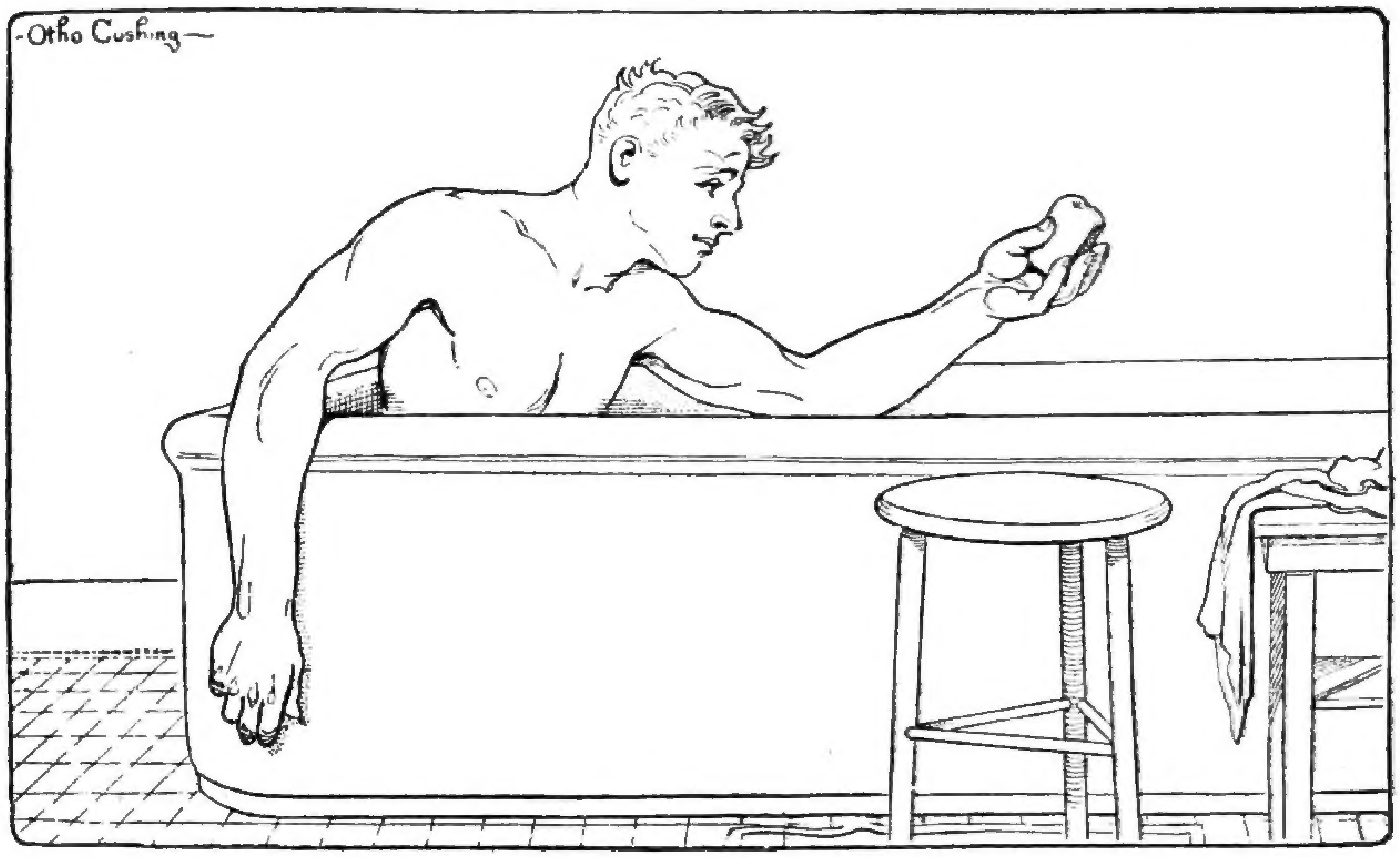
- ☐ **Business Management**
- ☐ **Modern Salesmanship**
- ☐ **Traffic Management**
- ☐ **Higher Accountancy**
- ☐ **Railway Station Management**
- ☐ **Law, Degree of LL.B.**
- ☐ **Commercial Law**
- ☐ **Industrial Management Efficiency**
- ☐ **Banking and Finance**
- ☐ **Modern Business Correspondence and Practice**
- ☐ **Modern Foremanship and Production Methods**
- ☐ **Personnel and Employment Management**
- ☐ **Expert Bookkeeping**
- ☐ **Business English**
- ☐ **Commercial Spanish**
- ☐ **Effective Speaking**
- ☐ **C. P. A. Coaching**

Name ....

Present Position ....

Address ....

To men who bathe in hope instead of lather


-Otho Cushing—

There are Ivoryless men in this country!

There are men who still go along from day to day deep-sea-diving in the tub for a sunken, slippery parallelopiped. When they finally retrieve it and rub it heartily against their manly frames, it reluctantly deposits a thin, sticky coating that they, in all innocence, think is lather.

We want the attention of these men for ten seconds.

We want them to understand that real lather—Ivory lather—is a three-dimensioned product particularly distinguished by thickness. It develops as quickly as pride after a twelve-foot putt. It disappears in the rinse like a platform after election day.

And when the Ivory cake slips its moorings, it remains on the surface, to be recaptured on sight without a search warrant.

Give these matters a thought, Gentlemen. They have much to do with the change from the Saturday night duty to the daily morning luxury.

Procter & Gamble

IVORY SOAP

99 44/100% PURE IT FLOATS

ALL the fees from a Board of Directors meeting couldn't buy a finer cake of soap for face and hands than Guest Ivory, the new cake of Ivory made especially for the washstand. Just the right size for either the right or the left hand. Five cents.

Copyright, 1924, by The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati